JEFF BECK, PETE TOWNSHEND, JOHN LEE HOOKER, GRAHAM NASH, ED KING & ANGUS YOUNG

GUITAR TRICKS INSIDER

DIGITAL EDITION

ISSUE #1 • DEC/JAN

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CELEBRATING

B.B. KING

HIS LIFE, HIS INFLUENCE, AND THE ORIGIN OF HIS VIBRATO TECHNIQUE

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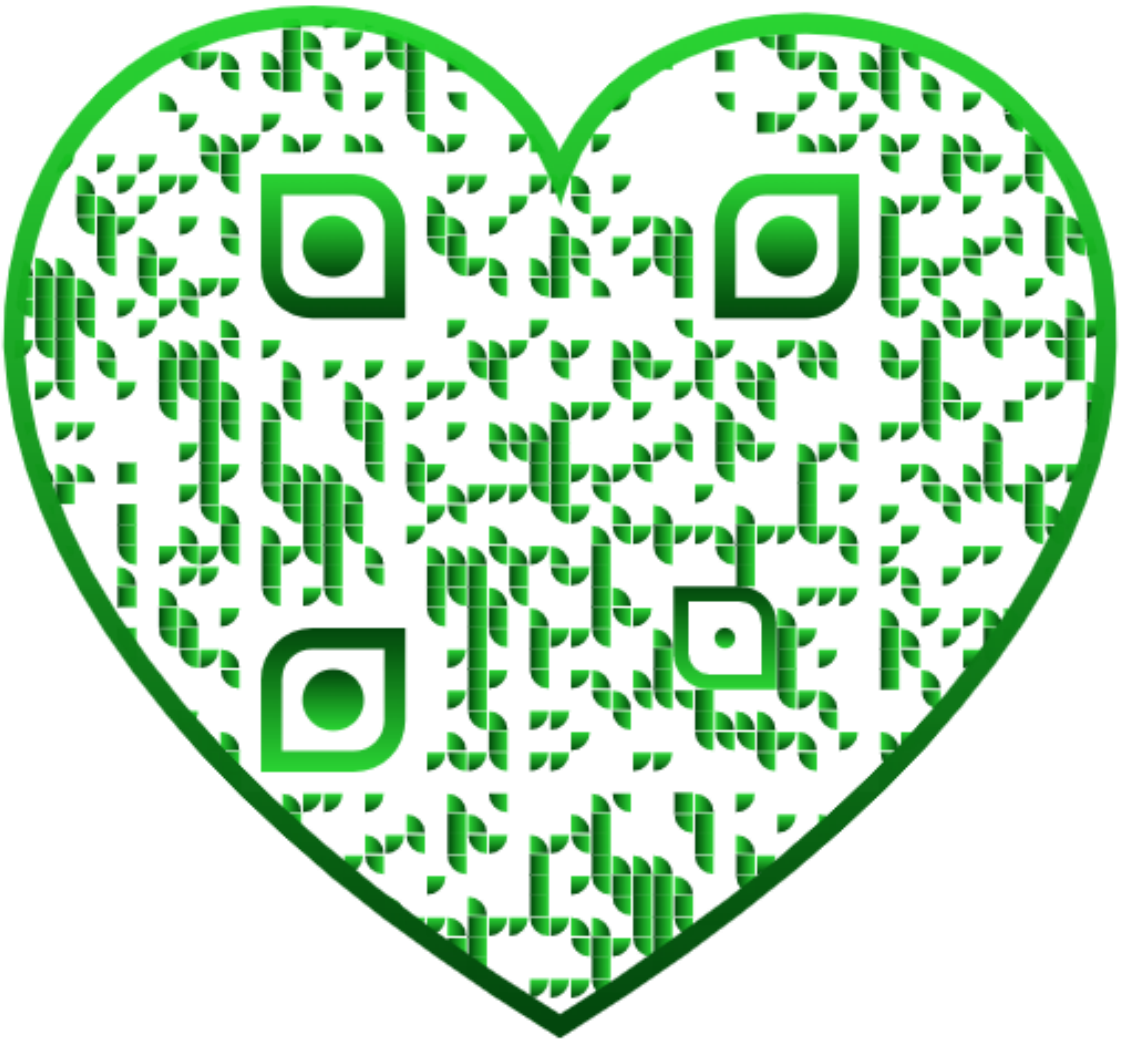

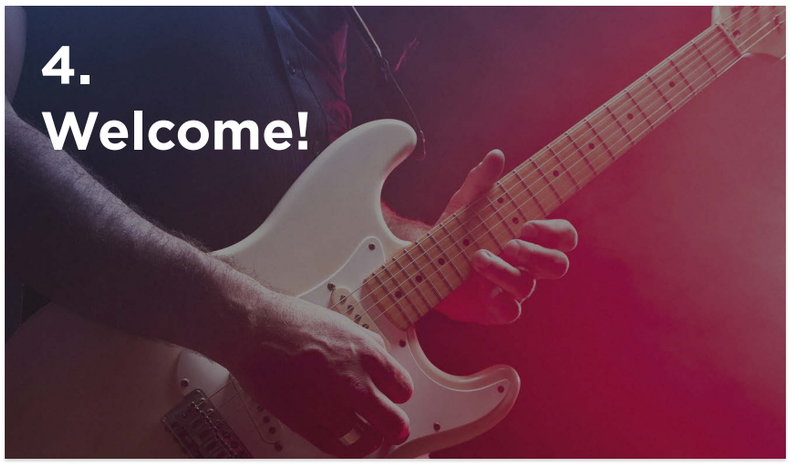

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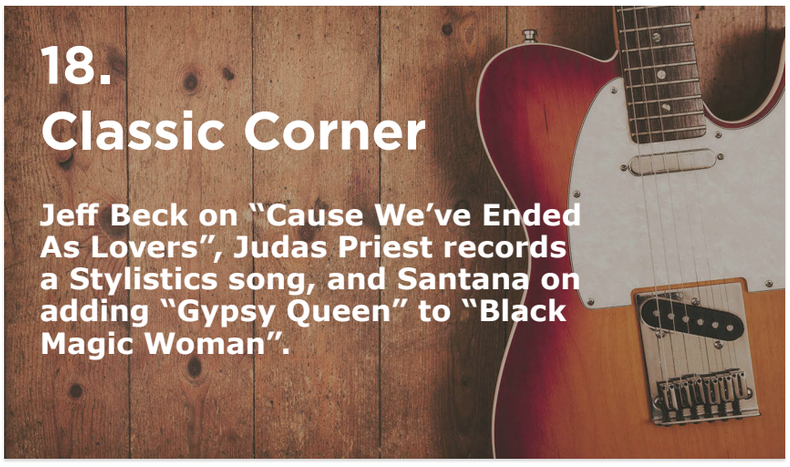

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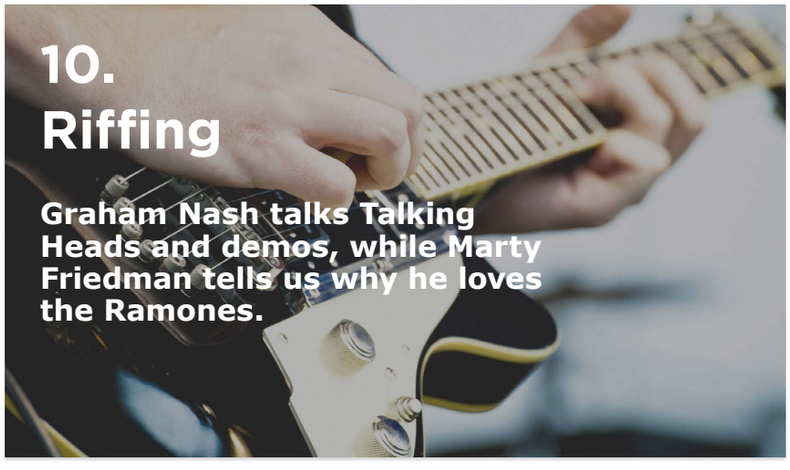

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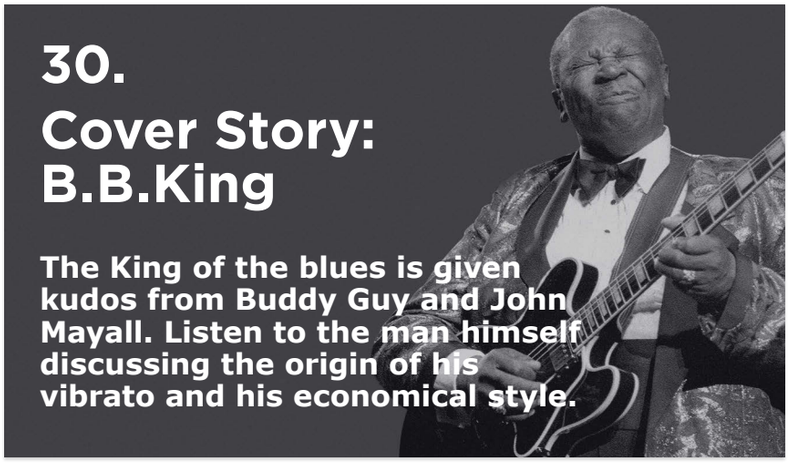
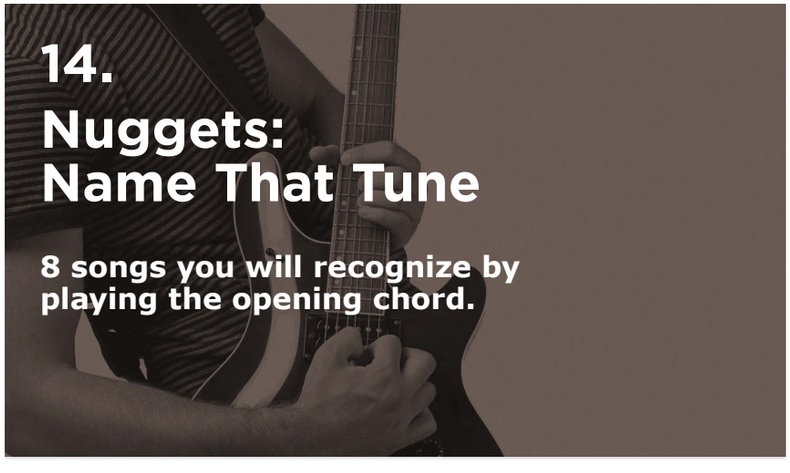


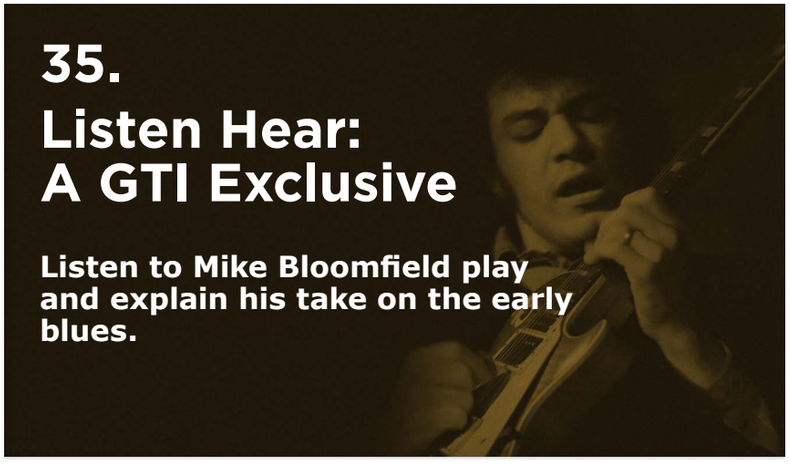
30. Cover Story: B.B.King

The King of the blues is given kudos from Buddy Guy and John Mayall. Listen to the man himself discussing the origin of his vibrato and his economical style.



14. Nuggets: Name That Tune

8 songs you will recognize by playing the opening chord.



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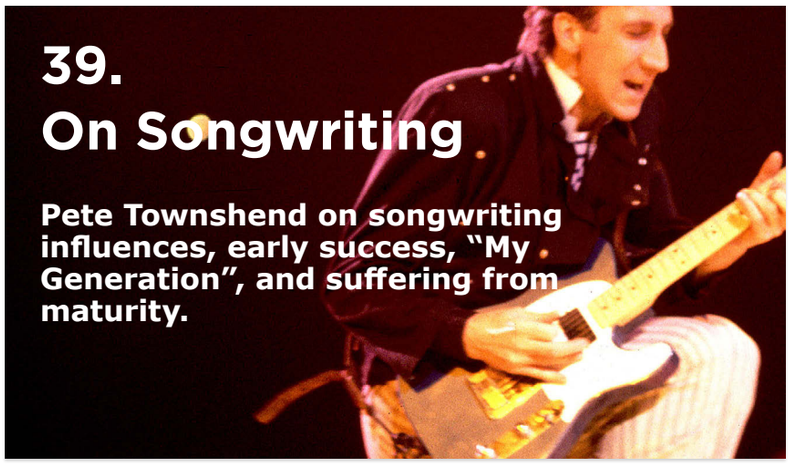
Listen to Mike Bloomfield play and explain his take on the early blues.



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Listen up as Dave Rubin explores how John Lee Hooker, Magic Sam, Keith Richards, Billy Gibbons and others each put their own twist on the classic.

Welcome to Guitar Tricks Insider

Editor **John Stix**

All guitarists start on the same path. That includes you and me, Hendrix and Page. That's right - the hobbyist who plays twice a week shares a path with all the guitar greats. Everyone who has picked up a guitar in the last 70 years has been ignited by the same spark. It's the moment you knew playing guitar was something you had to do. For some, that spark ignited a bon fire to light up the sky for the whole world to see. For others it remains a burning ember that stays within the confines of a bedroom or garage. But for every guitarist playing today it started with a spark.

For one generation it was seeing the Beatles on Ed Sullivan. For others it was Kiss, who launched a thousand picks. Still, others found their aha moment when Van Halen rampaged through the town. The spark can come from anywhere. For John Mayer it was seeing Michael J. Fox play guitar in the movie *Back to the Future*, and later receiving a cassette tape of Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Most of us then go through an imitation stage, so to speak, that includes falling in love with songs and albums, and heavy doses of listening. Many of us are seduced by the blues. For others, it's acoustic music or perhaps it's just about rocking out. Some of us will graduate from imitation to innovation, and move onto the larger stage. Most of us will simply retain the gift of playing for friends and family. However big or small that spark is, celebrating whatever brings you joy on the guitar is what Guitar Tricks Insider is all about.

We serve to enhance the GuitarTricks.com teaching site. That is where you'll learn all these great songs and what it takes to keep fueling that spark. But we know you have a list of essential albums, and talk about songs with your buddies. We know you'll never forget that first song you learned and your first aha moment. We know you pull out a show-off song now and then, and that there's always another song you'd like to cover. We know there are still sounds you want to explore and techniques you want to discover. We also know that the guitar greats we all admire actually still do the same thing we do. For them, that initial spark is no further from the surface than it is for the rest of us. So Guitar Tricks Insider is devoted to shining a light on this path that all guitarists have shared, and letting you know the spark is the same in everyone, and that the guitarists we call great are not as distant as we may think.

Now go have fun!

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL CITONE

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New York

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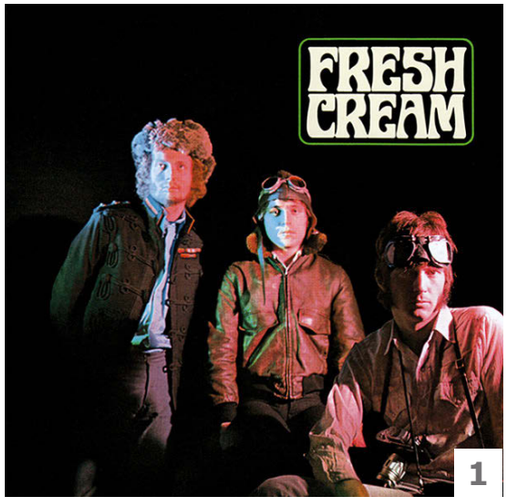
ESSENTIAL ALBUMS

Good music, classic or new, is best sought out from trusted sources. As guitar enthusiasts, who better to feed us recommendations than some of our favorite players? In each issue of **Guitar Tricks Insider** we will ask guitar masters for their top album picks.



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Lynyrd Skynyrd's Ed King.
Photo by Dave Plastik

ED KING

co-wrote two indelible rock classics. As a founding member of Strawberry Alarm Clock, he helped pen "Incense and Peppermints." There was a time when a song like this could top the Billboard charts and this one did. While King's other major contributions never reached that same level of success, they always come near the top of any list of rock's greatest songs. Let's face it, who wouldn't pick "Sweet Home Alabama"? Ed was with the band for their first three albums, left in 1975, and later played with the reunited Lynyrd Skynyrd in 1987. He wrote that Stratocaster riff we all play at the opening of "Sweet Home Alabama" and it's his voice that counts us into the song. We asked Ed King to give us 5 Essential Albums that guitarists should own. And here they are:

1. ***Fresh Cream,* by Cream**
2. ***Layla, by Derek & the Dominoes***
3. ***Allman Brothers Live at the Fillmore,* by The Allman Brothers Band**
4. ***Who's Next,* by The Who**
5. ***In Flight,* by George Benson**

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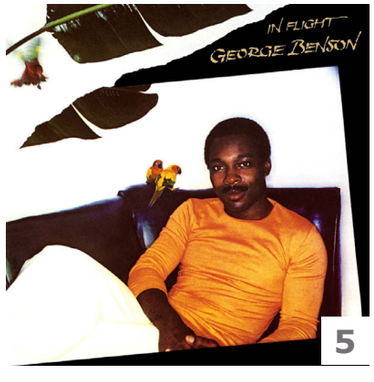

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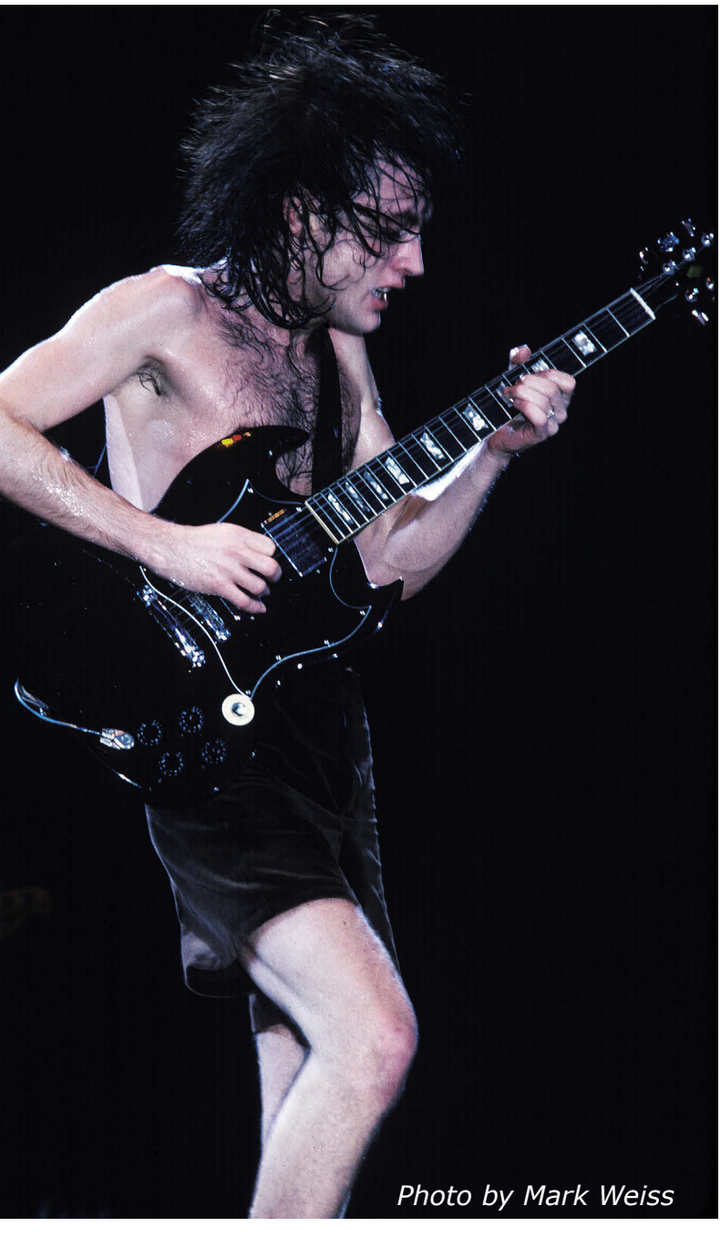
Photo by Mark Weiss

ANGUS YOUNG

is the co-founder, lead guitarist, and co-composer for AC/DC, Australia's best known hard rock band. Since 1973 the four of them have been stomping the floor rocking, and giving us classics such as "Highway to Hell," "Back in Black," "You Shook Me All Night Long," "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap," and "For those About to Rock (We Salute You)." Being one of the most important hard rock bands of all time, AC/DC have shown how just a few chords and a solid beat can change the world. Their opus *Back in Black* is often cited as the 3rd bestselling album of all time. We asked Angus Young to give us some essential listening and here is what he suggested:

1. ***Hard Again,* by Muddy Waters**
2. ***Bluesbreakers with Eric Clapton,* by John Mayall**
3. ***Yardbirds Greatest Hits,* by Yardbirds**

"Any old albums by Louis Armstrong. I love Louis Armstrong in some of his early records. I like all that Basin Street sound. It's all up music. That Dixieland is the most danceable music in the world to me. I can bop till I drop."

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> When people say, I'd like to send you a demo, should I go into the studio and do it? I say, listen, just put it down on guitar or piano and sing it because if it makes it there, if the song lives in that form, then no matter what you do to it, it will still be a fine song.
>
> - GRAHAM NASH

RIFFING

BY JOHN STIX

Music fans are constantly talking to each other about songs they love or love to hate. Why should recording artists be any different? They're not. We played some tunes for guitarists of various stripes and here is what they said.

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Guitar Player EDITORS' PICK

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GRAHAM NASH

(HOLLIES, CROSBY, STILLS AND NASH)
on **"Life During Wartime" The Talking Heads** from ***Stop Making Sense***

David Byrne is brilliant. It's about having something unique that you're adventurous with and you don't mind taking chances. He does it and pulls it off very successfully all the time. I think he's developed a persona that totally fits his music. Talking Heads are just great. I like this a lot. I love songs live with just a guitar and voice. "When people say, I'd like to send you a demo, should I go into the studio and do it? I say, listen, just put it down on guitar or piano and sing it because if it makes it there, if the song lives in that form, then no matter what you do to it, it will still be a fine song." That's quite true; it doesn't matter how you play it. He rearranged this song. That is very important. You have to keep yourself musically fresh because you can grind yourself into the ground real fast. Dylan has staggering courage in this area. We're on our 10th arrangement of "Love the One You're With." You've got to or else you just die.

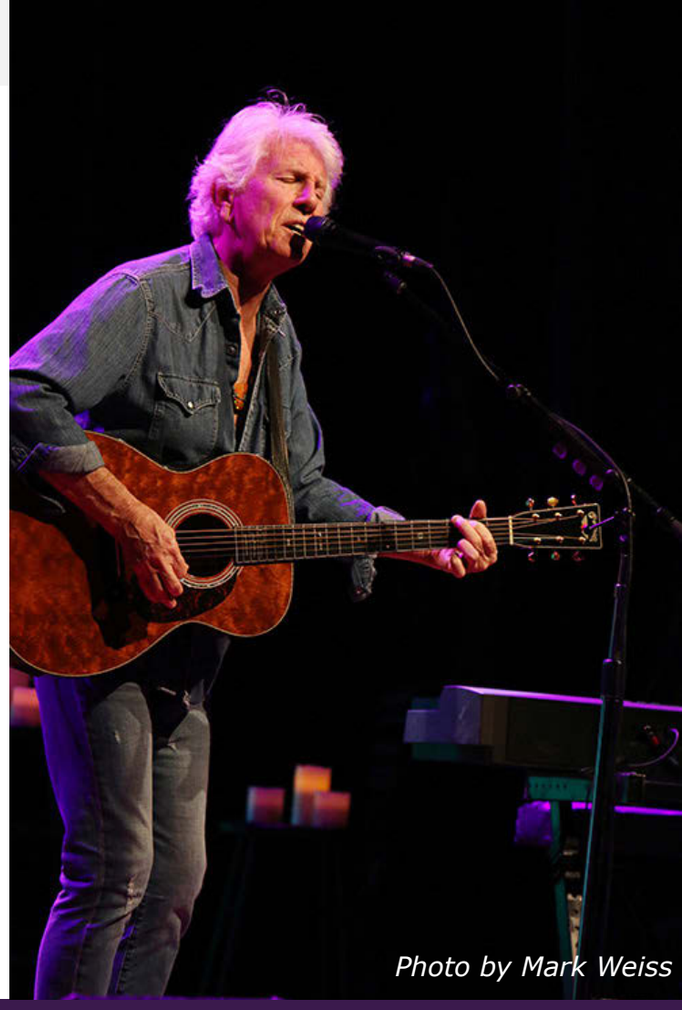

Photo by Mark Weiss

The Talking Heads - "Life During Wartime"

“I listened to the Ramones constantly. That’s my favorite band, period.”

Photo by Mark Weiss

MARTY FRIEDMAN

(CACOPHONY, MEGADETH)
on **“Blitzkrieg Bop” The Ramones**
from ***Ramones***

I listened to the Ramones constantly. That’s my favorite band, period. That’s what made me think guitar was easy. Ulrich Roth made me think guitar was difficult and there were limitless boundaries. With The Ramones I felt good because I could play it. So I learned every song of theirs and I played from the first song to the 14th song on every one of their albums when I was growing up. I did all down strokes, just like Johnny, to get that really strong right hand motion. I just love to listen to it now all the time. “Blitzkrieg Bop,” is a classic. Just absolutely - it’s my favorite.
I was never one of those guys who said guitarists should listen to this or that. I always say you should play only what you like from yourself. Every person is their own influence. I remember Jason (Becker) when I was hanging with him - said he never had heard Rush or Deep Purple before. I was thinking, how could you be so great and never have heard these bands? So everybody has got their own thing. I don’t like to suggest anything. But for me, that gave me the feeling of accomplishment because I learned their songs and I can pick them up by ear after I had only been playing six or eight months. I was very gratified and I just love people who stick to their guns and they don’t change their shit around. They don’t change their music. This album is the pop album, this album is the intense guitar album. They do what they do, and they do it great. I love that in a band.

The Ramones – “Blitzkrieg Bop”

nuggets

Name That Tune

By **Dave Rubin**

In 1888, the Victorian composition "The Lost Chord" became one of the first pieces of music to be recorded and played on the Edison Perfected Phonograph. Since then, it has come to represent different ideas to different people, including the notion that there is a "lost" chord in which all others reside. Be that as it may, there are a number of classic rock songs that begin with a chord or riff so "perfect" as to instantly identify the title.

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Guitar Player EDITORS' PICK

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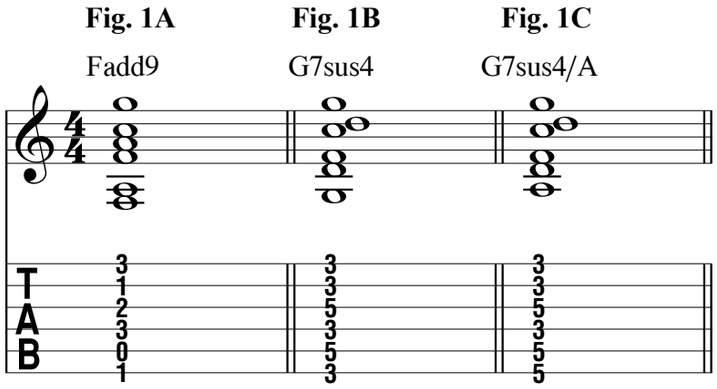


Arguably, at the top of the list is The Beatles' "A Hard Day's Night." Notice how Harrison is playing a 12-string, Lennon a 6-string, McCartney adding a low D on his Hofner and George Martin playing a piano layer all at the same time! **Fig. 1A** shows the Harrison Fadd9 chord. Close, but no cigar for playing even a reasonable facsimile of that *sound*. A G7sus4 chord as in **Fig. 1B**, courtesy of Randy Bachman, is better. However, the G7sus4/A in **Fig. 1C** may be the best solution if you are the only guitarist in a band charged with recreating the harmony.

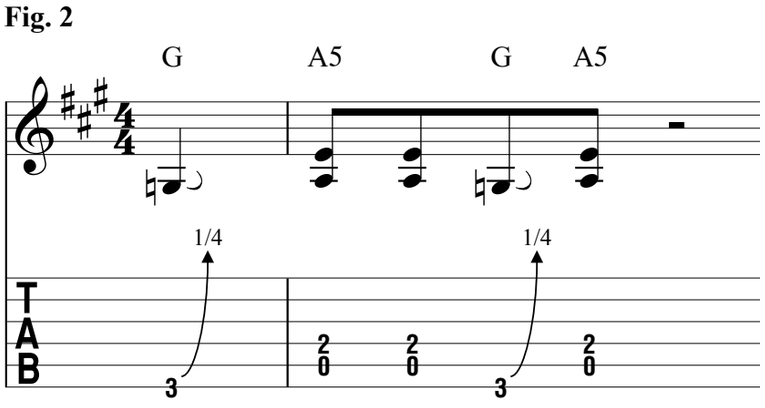
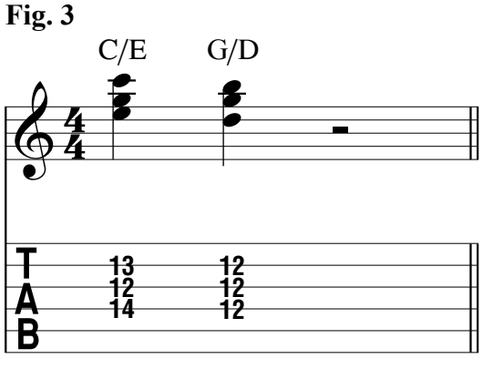
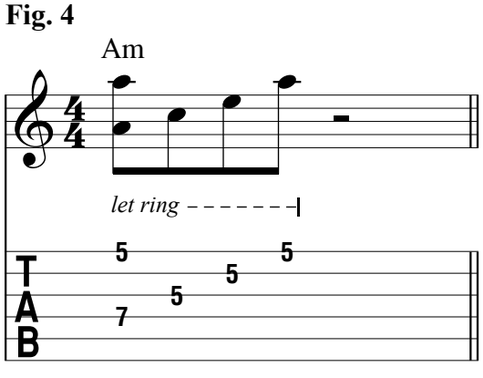


Fig. 2 contains the I-chord riff from "You Really Got Me" as envisioned by Eddie Van Halen Edward the V. The Kinks' original has Dave Davies playing stock G5 and A5 power chords, while Eddie applied a more hip blues-rock technique.

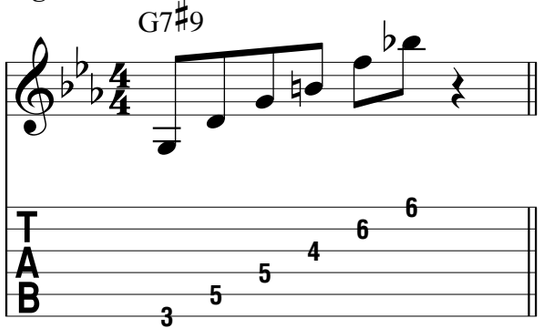


Riff-meister Keith Richards has forged a veritable musical library of unique rock chord riffs including the one in **Fig. 3**. Be aware how Keith is actually in his favorite open G tuning, which adds the tonic note on string 5. Nonetheless, "Brown Sugar," along with many other 'Stones classics, works equally well in standard tuning albeit in a slightly edited form.



The regularly voted #1 classic rock tune of all time comes from the exceptionally fertile musical mind of one Mr. Jimmy Page. On "Stairway to Heaven," **Fig. 4** should be barred at fret 5 with the index finger, and the octave A notes plucked with the bare thumb and index finger, or via hybrid picking with a conventional flat pick and the bare middle finger.

Fig. 5



There are many easily recognizable intro arpeggios to learn and savor. "Don't Take Me Alive" from Steely Dan clearly qualifies as seen in **Fig. 5**. The 7#9 voicing, also known as the "Hendrix chord," is a favorite tangy choice of countless rock, jazz, and funk musicians. Check out how it is necessary to hold down the D and A notes on strings 5 and 4, respectively, with just the ring finger. To quote Bob Dylan in "115th Dream," "I just said, 'Good luck!'"

Fig. 6

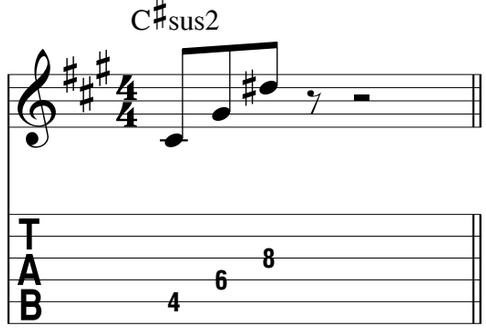
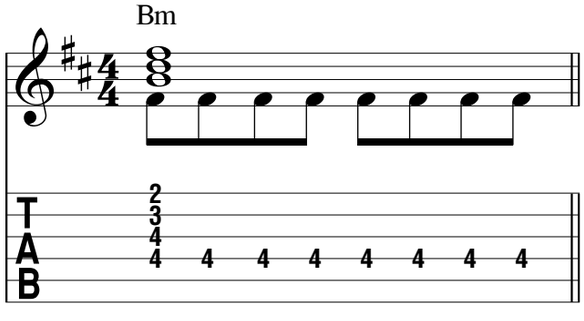


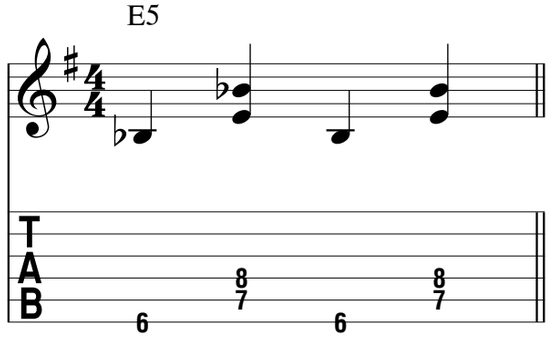
Fig. 6 shows the first chord in the wildly inventive intro to "Message in a Bottle." No doubt using his classical and jazz training to envision this sophisticated rock harmony, Andy Summers created his signature riff. It may also be a tendon-stretcher depending on the length of your fingers. That said, index, ring, and pinky fingers, low to high, are recommended.

Fig. 7



Pete Townshend has had "crazy flipper fingers" for over 50 years and his intro to "Pinball Wizard from *Tommy* is so harmonically rich it could "stand on its own" in the composer's words. The Bm in **Fig. 7** leads to eight other chords and is worth learning in its entirety.

Fig. 8



No survey of signature openings would be complete without the diabolical voicing in **Fig. 8** from Hendrix's "Purple Haze." Who thinks of such things? Answer: The greatest rock guitarist of all time. Be aware the E note on string 5 at fret 7 represents the bass on the recording to give the full effect of the forbidden "Devil's interval," as it was known during the Spanish Inquisition.

The Classic Corner features a set of revolving segments. This edition includes Got Ya Covered, where artists talk about songs they might like to cover, and Backtrack, where guitarists focus on the history of one of their famous songs.

BY JOHN STIX

Playing cover songs is a time honored tradition. Who hasn't played a favorite song by a favorite artist? Imitation is the easiest way to learn and as close to the "one day that will be me" dream as you can get, when you first start learning the instrument. It is the common thread for all of us as players, regardless of style. Why should it have been any different for our favorite guitarists? It wasn't. So we asked some great guitar players about what covers they had done or might like to do. Here are their responses.

GLENN TIPTON

"We had four free days in Paris. We've known Peter Waterman for a long time. We got together as an experiment. We did 'You Are Everything' by The Stylistics. I don't know whether it will ever be released. I can tell you I'm pretty sure it will never be on a Judas Priest album."

Photo by Mark Weiss

"You Are Everything" – Judas Priest

JEFF BECK

"Usually with a slow ballad I can hear my notes when the singer is singing. Like you were talking about Barbra Streisand or Stevie (Wonder) or somebody who can really lay on and rape a melody. I hear them embellishing and using their artistic license right to the full. Then I hear how I would do it. When I heard Syreeta singing 'Cause We've Ended As Lovers' I wasn't hearing her singing. I was just hearing me playing. I picked up the guitar and there was this song. Perfect."

Photo by Mark Weiss

"Cause We've Ended As Lovers" – Syreeta Wright

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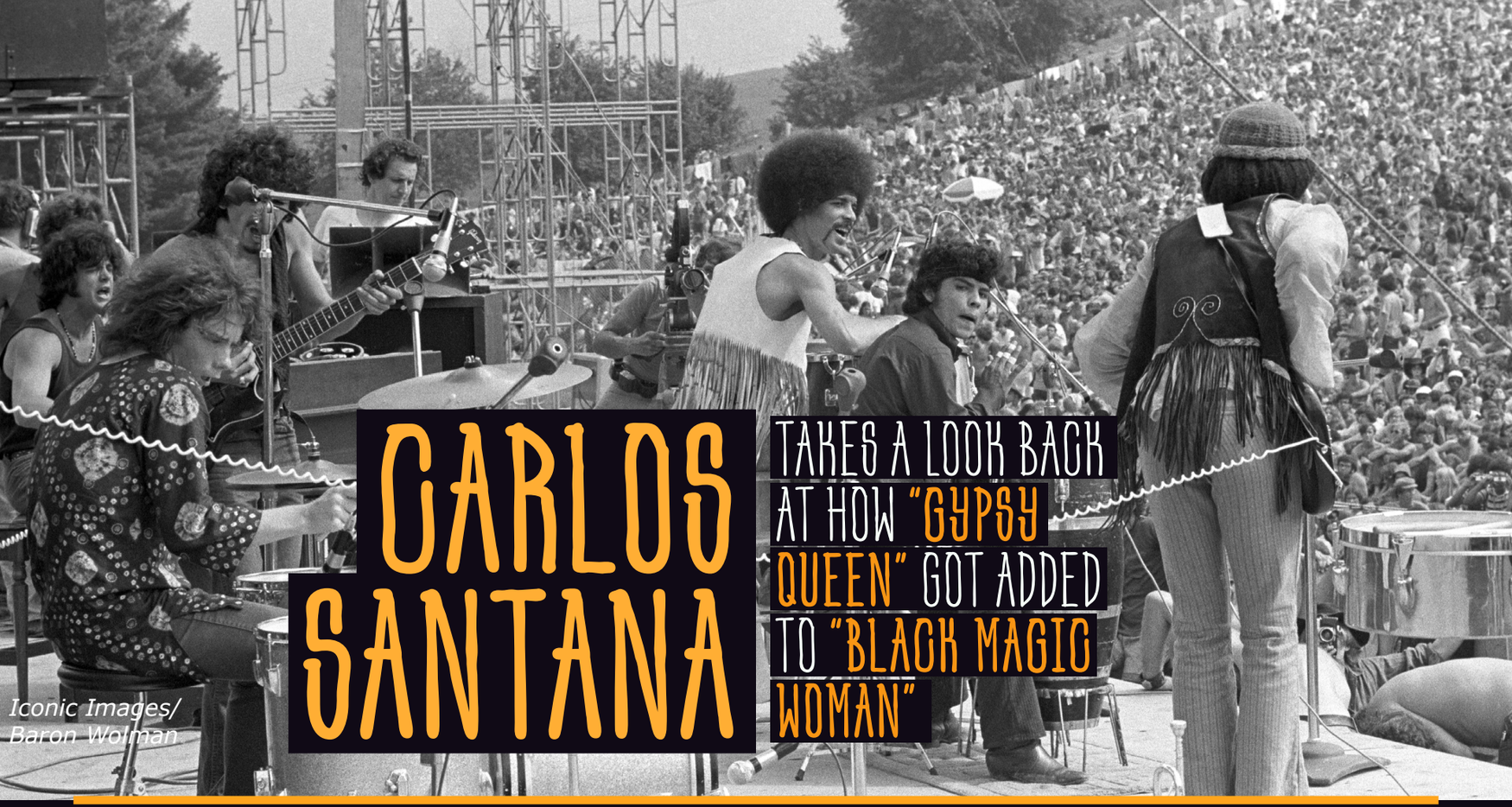

CARLOS SANTANA

TAKES A LOOK BACK AT HOW "GYPSY QUEEN" GOT ADDED TO "BLACK MAGIC WOMAN"

Iconic Images/ Baron Wolman

When was the first time you heard "Black Magic Woman"?

Santana: It was in Fresno, California, at a soundcheck. Gregg Rolie brought the cassette in and said, "You'll really like this song." He wanted to know if we could try it. I remember I liked the way he (Peter Green in Fleetwood Mac) did it, but I didn't like it for us. He starts with a different kind of chord in the blues. Now when I listen to it I like it. But back then I said, "Let's do something different to it." So we started messing around with it and basically put more of a Calypso, African/Cuban thing on it.

But the instrumental melody in the beginning is the same

Santana: The descending Wes Montgomery kind of melody is just basically "All Your Love" by Otis Rush. If you take the line "Got a black magic woman" and put in the words "All your lovin' is lovin'," you can hear that he changed the chords and made it so it's not ripping anybody off. It's like taking a seed and making a different tree with it, just like Luther Burbank used to do with roses. He was a botanist who would crossbreed roses. The rose might be all white but just the tip would be red. Peter Green did something to it and we did something different to it. And people say, "Well it's got to be a Santana song." It's more Santana than Fleetwood Mac.

How did "Gypsy Queen" get grafted on there?

Santana: I'm pretty sure it was my idea to segue the two songs. At that time all I was playing was Gabor Szabo. I basically felt there were enough B.B. King clones out there. Everybody from Otis Rush to Buddy Guy to Mike Bloomfield to Peter Green, was playing B.B. King. So I needed to find my own thing away from B.B. I love him, but I felt like I needed to get out from under his spell. Gabor Szabo, Bola Sete and Wes Montgomery got me out of it. I love the blues to this day. It's just that I didn't want to be a clone of somebody else. It's just like kids do today. You listen to this and that and by the time you sweat it, if you know how to do it, it comes out like you. Like Miles Davis. You can hear Billie Holiday and Louis Armstrong coming out of him.

Gabor Szabo – "Gypsy Queen"

Does the original "Gypsy Queen" by Gabor Szabo sound as similar as "Black Magic Woman" does to Fleetwood Mac?

Santana: No. basically his is more acoustic with Ron Carter (bass). It's more subdued. Our "Gypsy Queen" has more of a Fleetwood Mac or Jimi Hendrix kind of energy.

Is there more to the original song than what you play?

Santana: Oh yeah, we played just little parts of it. In those days, they told us to edit everything. Originally we went to extremes. The first Santana band would play nothing but long jam songs. No bridge, no choruses, no intros, just long jams. Albert Gianquinto, who used to play piano with James Cotton, is the one who told us it would probably be better for our album if we just make songs 3 minutes long instead of 8 or 12 minutes long. So that's why we edited.

Photo by Mark Weiss

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Sound Advice

BY JOHN STIX

This is a presentation of breakthrough guitar moments, where players share where and how they got to the next level, including their beginnings, as well as insight into how their sound and style developed over time. In this edition, we invited Joe Walsh and Ace Frehley to give us some sound advice.

JOE WALSH

Starting with the first James Gang record back in 1968, Joe Walsh immediately established himself as one of America's great singer/songwriter/guitarist. From the James Gang ("Funk #49") to his work as a solo artist ("Rocky Mountain Way," "Life's Been Good") and later with the Eagles ("Hotel California," "Life in the Fast Lane") Joe's two voices – in front of the microphone and behind a six string – became renowned for their simplicity, honesty and uniquely recognizable style. Despite being the self-designated class-clown of American rock royalty, Walsh eventually put a straightforward attitude on his sleeve, and along with his six-string voice, speaks in economical yet memorably melodic phrases. Here in the 2010s, almost 50 years since the James Gang burst on the scene, Walsh interrupts the serious tone of the post-digital bands to remind us that today's rockers, like yesterday's, are just ordinary guys. But some still look better in silly hats than others.

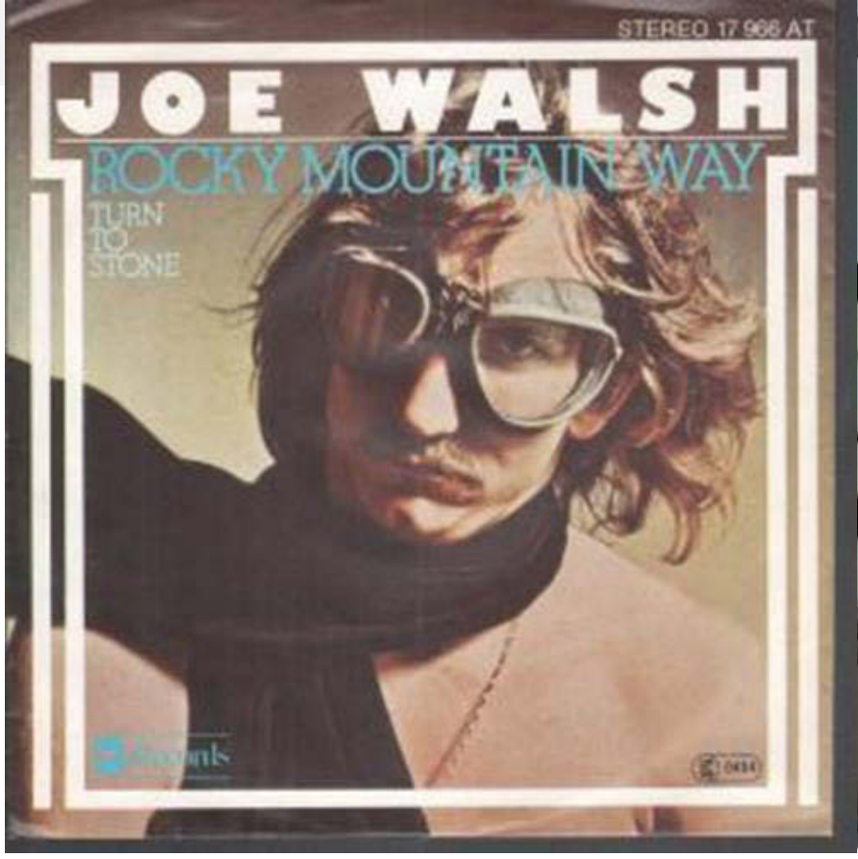
You have a thing for rhythmic symmetry and texture.

Joe Walsh: Exactly. That's just something I have always heard. I played different things growing up. I played clarinet, oboe, trombone and stuff like that. So I was always part of an orchestra. When I listen to other people's music, I am really most interested in the textures and the way everything goes together to make up what you hear. I don't usually pay much attention to the words. That's the way I've always been, and that goes over into my music. Alan Parsons is real good with textures. Todd Rundgren is another good example of a guy who uses textures.

As a guitarist, you shifted from playing the instrument to playing a melody.

Joe Walsh: Right. That has a lot to do with the James Gang being a three-piece band. That's all there was: bass, drums, and me. Peter Townshend also taught me the ups and downs of lead-rhythm playing. In the '70s, the James Gang toured with The Who when they did *Tommy* in Europe. Townshend and I buddied up for the tour and hung out together. Of course, I watched him and a lot of it rubbed off on me.

"Playing loud and playing soft is a tool that not enough people use."



As a trio, you were content from the first record to make silence part of your music.

Joe Walsh: That has a lot to do with dynamics. It's the contrast of going full-on against silence. Playing loud and playing soft is a tool that not enough people use. So many rock bands turn it on ten and play as fast as they can. Dynamics is just another element of texture. It can be as powerful as anything else. When I was young, in the old days, it was full-on everything. A lot of good guitar players are like that. But I think Albert King could blow away Eddie Van Halen, just out of the simplicity of the soul of it. It's an acquired thing. When guitar players are young and hungry, they are kick-ass. After a while, you mellow out and learn to talk more in melodic statements.

You were at that point for the first James Gang record (Yer' Album).

Joe Walsh: Well, yeah, I was. But you've got to remember we played for 3 or 4 years, five nights a week, before we gained any real public awareness. We were just a bar band in Ohio. I miss those days. Now we just go out and do a couple of hours. But four sets a night, 5 nights a week – that's when I was really good.

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Sound Advice

BY JOHN STIX

Ace Frehley

Without the makeup, without the staging, or the loud back-line, Kiss is left with just their songs. But that's fine with them, because in the final analysis, Kiss always was a pop band in metal clothing. Just as the Ramones thought of themselves as the Beach Boys, Kiss was never a heavy metal band. They just looked and acted that way. For Kiss, metal was only skin deep. They would trace their lineage to the Beatles, not Black Sabbath. Their combination of pop music with theatrics launched thousands of careers. And no matter how fine current Kiss guitarist Tommy Thayer is as a musician, performer and composer, the Kiss that will always remain in their fans' hearts, are the original members. For that reason, Ace Frehley is one of the most influential rock guitarists there has ever been. Thousands of players saw him, heard him, and thought, "I can do that." And they did. Now, Ace Frehley remembers the moment he wanted to be a rock star.

“After cutting school and going to see that show (The Who) I knew that’s what I wanted to do. I actually made the decision that day. That day I decided I wanted to be a rock star.”

Photo by Mark Weiss

What brought you to the instrument?

Ace Frehley: When I saw The Who’s first New York appearance. It was actually The Who and Cream on the same bill. It was a Murray the K show. They were opening up for Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels. That’s how long ago that was. When I was 16 I was kind of at a crossroads. I didn’t know if I wanted to be a commercial artist or a professional musician. My guidance counselor in high school was telling me to become a commercial artist because he felt I excelled in that. That should be my livelihood. But there was a little voice inside that kept saying you can be a rock star if you really practice and get your shit together. After cutting school and going to see that show I knew that’s what I wanted to do. I actually made the decision that day. That day, I decided I wanted to be a rock star. When I went to see that show and saw Townshend throw his guitar 20 feet in the air and catch it, I just said “wow I can do that.” I know I could if I practiced and put all my energies into it. I got very excited. I saw in the Who, theatrics mixed with rock. From that day on, I made it my goal. Everybody thought I was crazy – from my family to my friends. I used to play in bars and they would go, “you’re okay but you’re never going to make it.” I used to emulate Hendrix and Pete Townshend – my heroes – Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page. I hear the same thing from guitar players today. That they used to stand in front of a mirror when they were kids and imitate me. It’s a never ending cycle.

Were you the best around in the bars?

Ace Frehley: I don’t think I was the best. I still don’t think today I am the best. But I think I have something very special to offer.

Does everybody have something very special to offer?

Ace Frehley: Usually – if they’re successful. I’m not the best player; I’m not the fastest player; but I still know how to get emotion out of a song and put it across.

After all this time is there anything that gets you charged up about playing the guitar?

Ace Frehley: There is an excitement around hard rock ‘n’ roll and heavy metal that was there when I was 16 and it’s still there today. I’ve been playing the guitar since I was 13. It’s like an energy field. It’s a give and take situation with the audience and the performer.
I experienced it very young and I still experience it today. It’s a magical feeling. It’s a natural high. The reason I’m still doing it is because I can still experience it and I’m a junky for it.

B.B. KING

BY JOHN STIX

Photo by Mark Weiss

"I got my vibrato from watching B.B. King. I think every guitar that is being played by anybody should have a B on it. That man has a left hand that is unbelievable. - Buddy Guy"

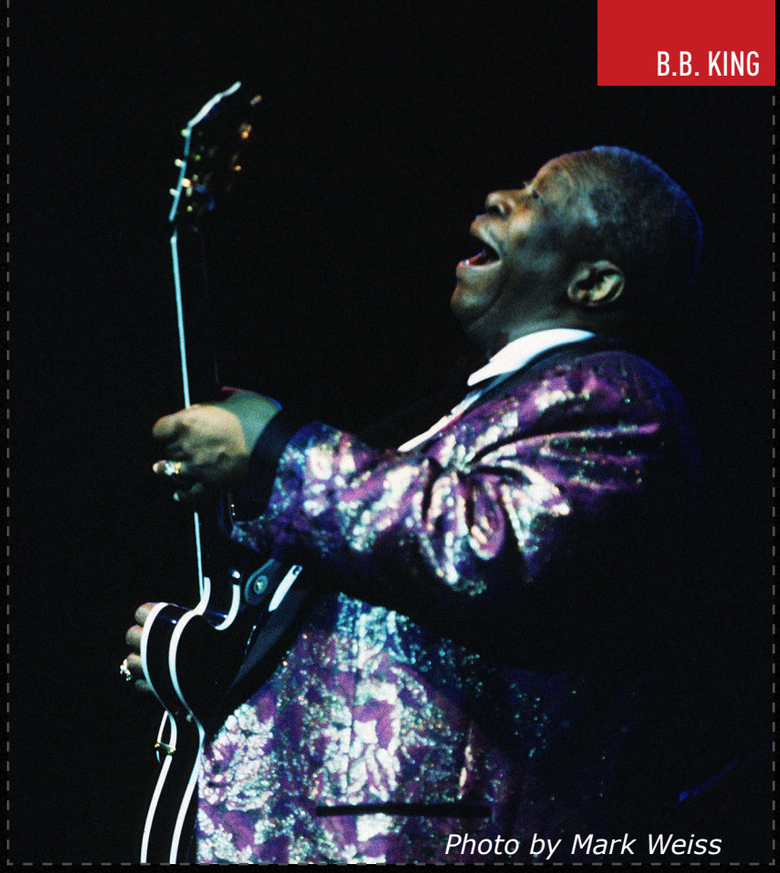


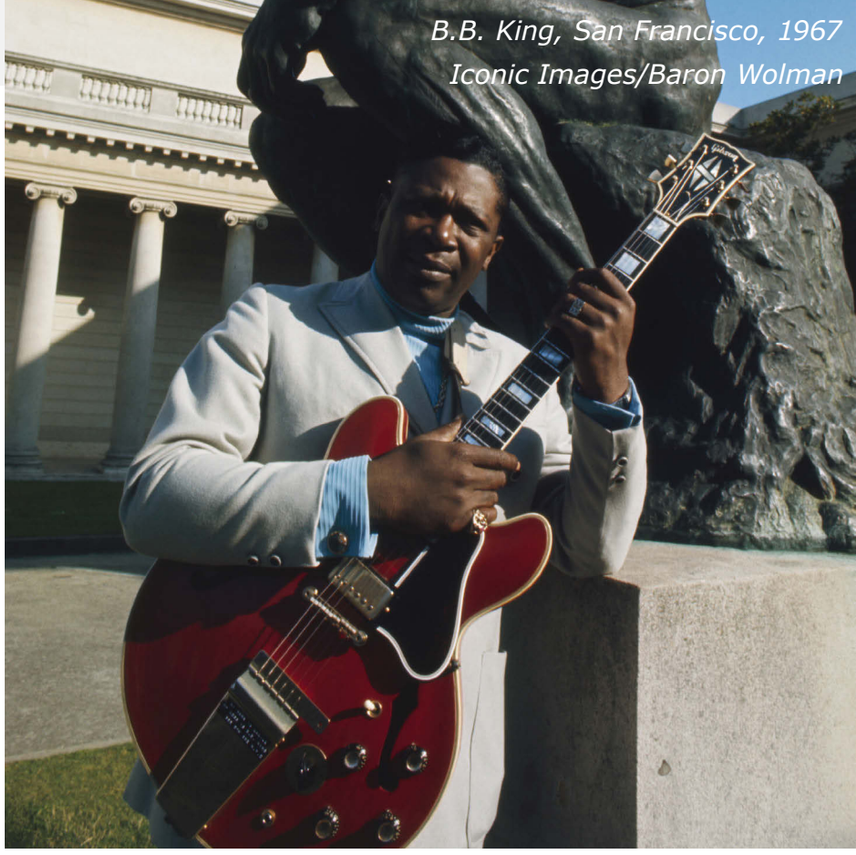
Photo by Mark Weiss

The guitar solo is the most personal form of expression on the instrument. While all guitarists work with the same building blocks – scales and patterns, 6 strings, and 22 or 24 frets – it is the way they make the notes speak that defines the individual artist. Anyone can be a stylist. One just needs to discover that voice on the instrument.

B.B. King, the great blues singer, began sharing his soulful truth from the moment he started singing for tips on Delta street corners some 75 years ago. And with his voice, so did his guitar Lucille. Like a ventriloquist speaking through its dummy, B.B. King's singing guitar made us laugh, cry, and pay close attention as she would tell tales that were as vivid as King's own words. The world has known many great blues guitarists who also sang, like T-Bone Walker and Muddy Waters. And there are great singers who are also master instrumentalists, like Prince and Stevie Wonder. But it is B.B. King who stood alone in merging both talents into an uncommon marriage of equals. His celebration in singing and song were unprecedented in their influence. Together they complemented and supported each other, and pulled his music into uncharted areas of musical expression.

There are infinite amounts of ways one can play the blues. It all comes down to interpretation, tone, and dynamics. And with it, phrasing becomes the key to guitar playing in the same way phrasing is the key to a singer. How much one puts into a note, how much one lays back. It essentially boils down to making a guitar talk and sing. It's pretty amazing when it works.

And B.B. King worked it like no other. His simple, clear style combined with an immense conviction has influenced generations of guitarists – from Buddy Guy and Stevie Ray Vaughan, to Johnny Lang. But King was certainly not without his own influences, though, as he was inspired to play music after hearing T-Bone Walker's "Stormy Monday." In this domino effect, his own playing has encouraged countless guitarists to emulate him, and then discover their own voice, their own feel in their own music. So it's no surprise that when arena rockers are asked to name essential records for a home collection, *B.B. King Live At the Regal* is listed with other iconic rock albums like Hendrix's *Axis: Bold As Love*, Led Zeppelin's *Physical Graffiti*, and Van Halen's *Van Halen*.



B.B. King, San Francisco, 1967
Iconic Images/Baron Wolman

We cannot talk about the language of B.B. King without mentioning his vibrato – the one-note sting that instantly commands our attention. No less a guitar master himself, Buddy Guy credits King for his own guitar style saying, "I got my vibrato from watching B.B. King. I think every guitar that is being played by anybody should have a B. on it. He is much more modest then I am. Every time I see him I tell him this, and he laughs. But I think so, man. That man's got a left hand that is unbelievable." King's explanation is much more modest, saying he developed his sound through his own inability to imitate the pedal-steel guitar.

Further elaborating on King's sound, guitarist Jeff Healey explains, "B. is from that school where you had to make the notes happen and the feeling come out solely with the hands (not with the equipment). Probably the greatest privilege in my life was to sit on stage with B.B. and listen to the sound that is right there on the stage. He has one of the guitar-to-amp sounds that is not overpowering but it's certainly not something that can be overpowered. Listen to 'When Love Comes to Town,' which U2 wrote for B.B. That's a great example of showing how B.B. King's sound can work in what is considered a hip band of today. He does not sound out of place. B.B. King, Jack Teagarden, and Eric Clapton all have a lot of soul. You know when you hear what they are doing that they mean it."

Blues great John Mayall talks about B.B. King and the power of the one note: "A lot of times, a guitar player will hear someone like Eric Clapton and miss the point. They'll say that's a fast lick and they'll concentrate on doing fast licks without knowing where to put them. That's a danger. They think that to be the best guitar player means you should play more notes, where it should be sort of the opposite of that. It's the economy of it all. B.B. King could play two notes and make them say volumes, whereas someone who doesn't know where to put them can play 60 notes in the same time span and get nowhere and just miss the point. For my band, I am looking for players that have this intensity of what they put into one note. B.B. King will play one note and it will sing and have a purity about it that says so much. If any guitar player has that kind of feel in him that comes across in the course of one note, then you know you're on the right track."

B.B. King had a diction that only he possessed. You need not be familiar with a particular tune to be able to know that it's King playing the guitar. This is why, in addition to being a guitarist's guitarist, he was also a "populist" player who is appreciated by the non-guitar crowd. Unlike many other guitar heroes, B.B. King never used speed or outrageous chops to astound. He played the silence as much as the music. And because of that, his slight bends and vocal articulations are easily heard and understood. He didn't command with volume or overwhelm with virtuosity. In fact, he didn't play the guitar - he simply played the music.

Want to learn how to play guitar like B.B. King?

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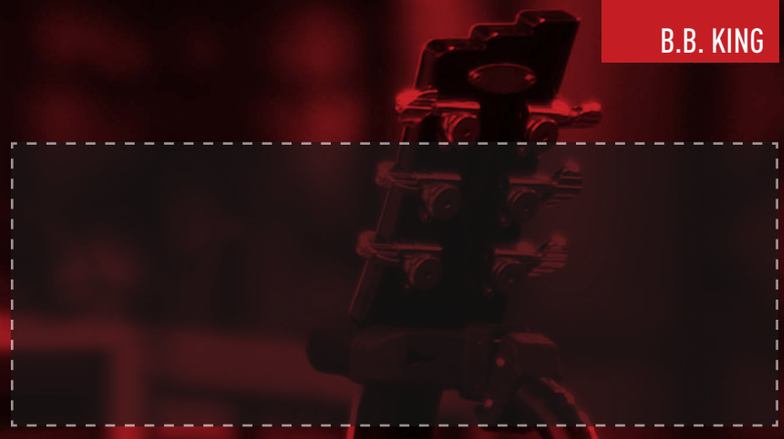

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT OF MY INTERVIEW WITH B.B. KING. WE DISCUSSED THE CREATION OF HIS PERSONAL VIBRATO AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS ONE-NOTE-SAYS-IT-ALL STYLE.
TO HEAR THE AUDIO, CLICK ON THE LINK.

We've studied all kinds of guitar players. And one of the famous quotes we have is Carlos Santana saying, "My sound, my cry, that which you know to be a Carlos Santana sound I got from listening to B.B. King and first trying to imitate him." I wanted to know if there was a place, an inspiration or an influence from which you developed your sound on the guitar?

B.B. King: Alright. That's very interesting. That came about in my early career. There was many bottleneck guitarists around - guys playing with a bottleneck, some playing with a steel. And I could never do it. I could never ever do it. So what I started to do, then, was to trill my hand and my ears would tell me that this sounds similar to what these guys was playing with the bottlenecks. 'Cause I was always crazy about that bottleneck sound. I was always crazy about steel guitar also. I was crazy about it.

Hawaiian pedal steel guitar?

B.B. King: Yeah, Love 'em, crazy about 'em. Some of the country players, oh man, ooh god they sound so good. So I could never play it, so that's how I actually started. I started to trill my finger and I kept doing it and kept doing it and each time my ears would say this sounds similar, so that's how that sound began.

When we talk about B.B. King in (music) class we always talk about the economy of notes. I tried to tell one kid how to tell different blues players apart. Besides trying to express what feeling is, which is a difficult thing to talk about, I always talk about B.B. King as always playing the one note. They wondered if you went through a process of playing a lot of notes?

B.B. King: Yes, there was a time in my early career. Well I liked jazz, too. So very early in my career I would practice playing fast and practice a lot of times trying to put in a lot of jazzy licks into what I was doing. But then after a while I started to find that I couldn't put myself into what I was doing as much. And it's almost like I guess each musician, each person with the exception of maybe a very few, their personality in their artistry is almost like speaking - talking. So in other words, I don't talk very fast because I used to stutter a lot when I was a kid. And in order to try to make myself understood I have to kind of take my time and say things that in a lot of cases may not be as good diction or good English even. But at least it's my way of trying to make myself understood. So it's the same thing playing my instrument. That's the phrasing.

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LISTEN HEAR

BY JOHN STIX

Iconic Images/ Baron Wolman

A newly discovered lesson in the blues by **Mike Bloomfield.**

Good news. It's never too late to discover Mike Bloomfield. Chicago born and bred, Bloomfield is the American equivalent of England's Peter Green. Both of these guys are killer blues guitarists with talent and style enough to make them major guitar heroes. Yet somehow during the 1960s era of guitar greats they remained at least partially in the shadows.

One of my "let me turn you onto" albums is the Mike Bloomfield led Electric Flag debut *A Long Time Comin'*. Bloomfield's R&B blues band with horns preceded Al Kooper's Blood Sweat and Tears and featured Buddy Miles, Harvey Brooks, and Nick Gravenites. This album was anything but blues by the numbers and featured memorable songs, killer soul horn charts, sound collage, and guitar playing that thrilled the likes of Carlos Santana and Robben Ford. Ford recalls, "When this record came out it was my breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Mike Bloomfield was my first guitar hero, and probably the only one that I ever emulated to the point where I used to sound a lot like him."

Bloomfield's playing was lauded early on by the likes of Muddy Waters and Buddy Guy. His contributions to the first two Paul Butterfield Blues Band albums in the mid 60s – the self-titled debut and *East West* – finds him as the American counterpart to Clapton with Mayall. His session work with Bob Dylan on *Highway 61 Revisted* and subsequent performance with Dylan at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival are now legend.

Little discussed but not to be overlooked, he introduced live audiences to other players he found worthy. Santana's first recorded appearance is on *The Live Adventures of Mike Bloomfield and Al Kooper*. Decades later, we discover that he introduced Johnny Winter to the Fillmore East, as heard on *The Fillmore East: The Lost Concert Tapes 12/13/68*.

But for me it's the music on *A Long Time Comin'* and the first *Super Session* album with Al Kooper that became the gateway for turning people on to this extraordinary musician. Bloomfield's playing on these recordings is both fiery and thoughtful. He is not playing licks. He is constructing ideas, and building a path to which he invites us to join.

And in 1975, in San Francisco, he literally laid down that path when he accepted an invitation to teach my junior high's music class about the blues. He arrived alone, a harmonica in hand but no guitar. He borrowed my acoustic and one of my electrics, and proceeded to talk about and sometimes play the blues for the next 90 minutes. As was his way, he talked non-stop. It was exhilarating.

AND I RECORDED IT:

"As soon as there were amplifiers, the first place that got them was the country, not the city. They got them from Robuck catalogs and Ward catalogs."

Mike Bloomfield: A guitar lesson on the early styles of the blues.

One of the earliest styles of blues I ever remember hearing on radio, record or anywhere was – it didn't have chord changes. It was based on a drone. If you ever listen to Indian music, a drone is music that stays in one key. It just goes over and over and over. The variation is in the rhythm and in a few notes but it never changes chords. The song may change chords and the singing may change chords, but the guitar playing doesn't change chords. (He plays an example.)

Now that stays in one key but if you were to sing the regular blues refrain where one line that rhymes with the other one and then the third line, you could go right along with it. But it doesn't change keys.

Now, do you all remember what I sort of just played? I'll play some more types – just different kind of blues. This style of playing keeps its steady beat with the thumb. It's like a piano. Your thumb is like your left hand. These fingers (the other fingers) is like your right hand. They work independently of each other. (plays an example) Which is sort of different than (plays a bit like the first example) what I was first playing. It's a lot more melodic and sort of - it's just not as primitive. It's sort of more sophisticated. These are all what I call basically country blues styles because they're not really for a band. You can play them with a band but it sounds real good just playing by yourself.

(Plays some more)

Were they country blues? – because at the time they were developed, there wasn't an electric guitar? This was the type of music you could sit on your back porch and get together with your friends and play. You didn't need an electric guitar.

Well I don't know. As soon as there were amplifiers, the first place that got them was the country, not the city. They got them from Robuck catalogs and Ward catalogs.

I was under the impression that the amplifier was developed so you could be heard over people talking in the bars.

The amplifer was developed the same way the microphone was developed. It was loud – that's true – but as soon as an amplifier was for sale, the first place you could get anything musical for that was for sale, before you could even get them in the stores, was the Robuck catalog and Ward catalog.

AN AFTERTHOUGHT:

I have also included a link to the opening number from A Long Time Comin', which is the best blues rock rendition of Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor." That says a lot considering you can find versions by Hendrix, Clapton, and Zeppelin ("The Lemon Song"). If you're a modern blues-rock fan and haven't found this album yet, you are in for some good time. Enjoy.

Mike Bloomfield
Audio Transcription

The Electric Flag play "Killing Floor"

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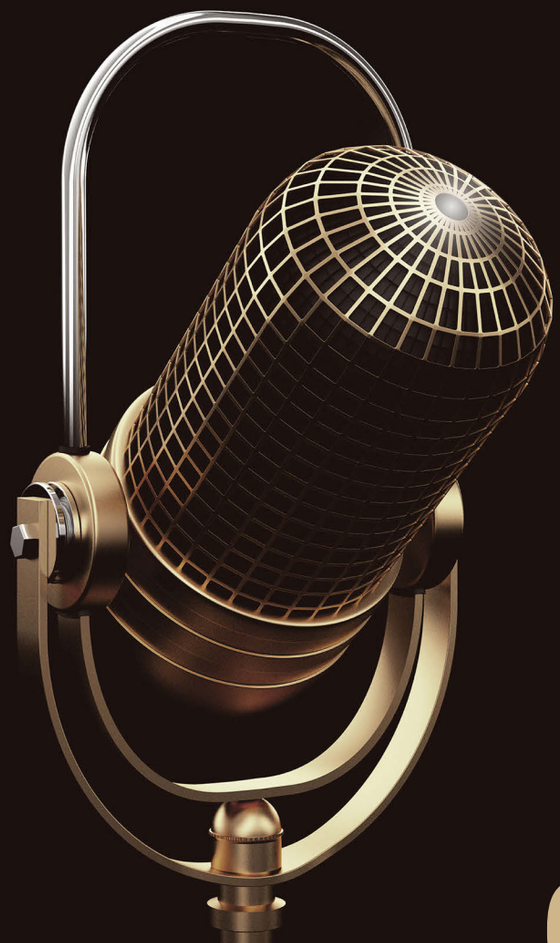


ON SONGWRITING INTERVIEW WITH PETE TOWNSHEND

BY BRUCE POLLOCK

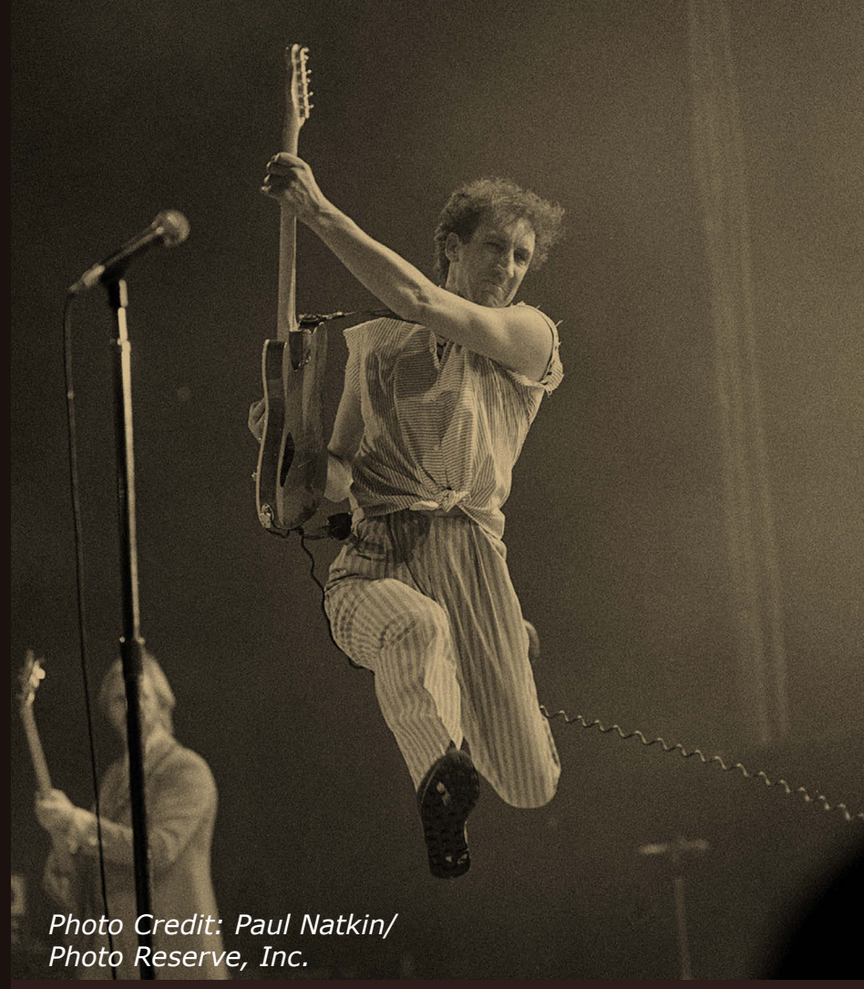


Photo Credit: Paul Natkin/ Photo Reserve, Inc.

Honest to a fault, Pete Townshend reveals that he first picked up a guitar because, "I really did think at the time that it was going to be the only way I was ever going to get laid." At art school, his first song, "We Close Tonight," was written in the aftermath of blowing his only chance with his first serious crush. And it was never his intention to write a rock opera in the first place. He didn't feel his two major assaults on the rock opera form, *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia*, had proper endings. "That was my manger, Kit Lambert's idea." Finally, he might never have picked up guitar and pen again had he not been asked to do so by a nameless executive at EMI, thus potentially depriving rock of one of its greatest songwriters, and the world of such classics as "Magic Bus," "Pinball Wizard," "My Generation," "Happy Jack," "Substitute," "Behind Blue Eyes," and "Won't Get Fooled Again."

INFLUENCES

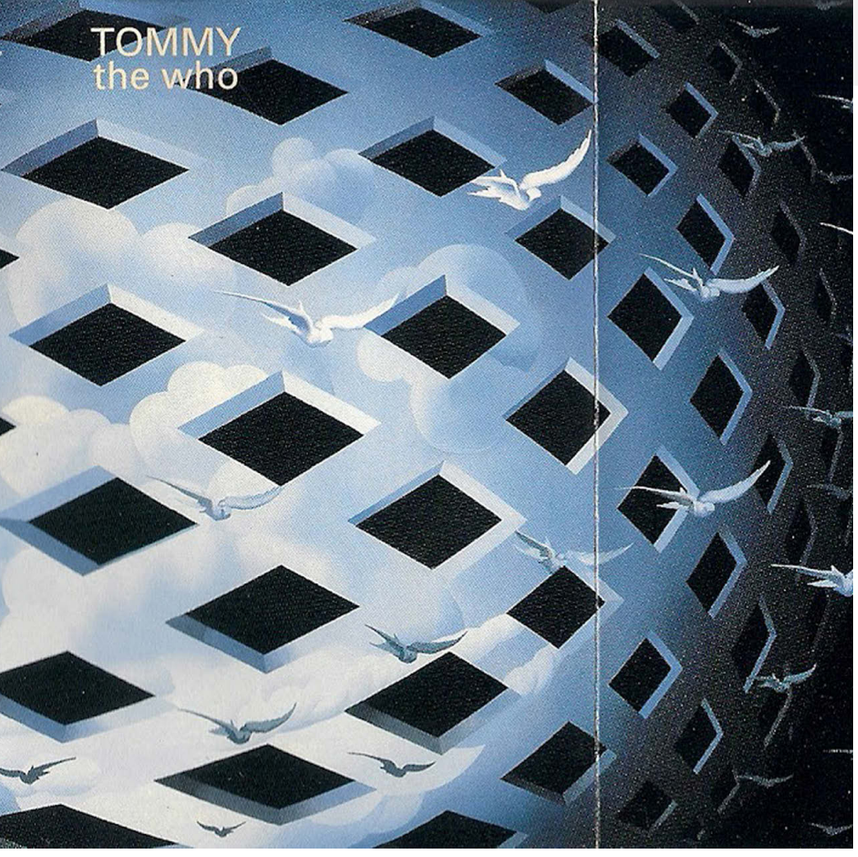
I was influenced a lot by the Stones. I've always felt Mick Jagger to be much older--he's two years older than me, but he's always felt a lot older. Maybe that's because they were a bigger group. But I liked almost everything they did. I also liked a lot of the Beatles stuff but I was never influenced that much by it. I mean, musically they just seemed to have such a peculiar method of working. Also, a lot of it was melodic in a way that although it sounded great when they did it, when you tried to find out what it was that made it tick and react to it musically, it was sort of like Italian love songs. How can you be influenced by that? Ray Davies is one of my favorite songwriters. His stuff is a little heavily nostalgic but I still really like it. I was quite keen on Elton John's first album. I didn't entirely realize at the time it was a two man show. That weakened it for me. I really like Joni Mitchell, but then again I don't always listen to the actual words. What gets me is the sound. She writes so personally. She writes about things that are so secret and I sort of shy away from that a little bit. I'm deeply in love with her, though.

EARLY SUCCESS

Almost from the first time I put pen to paper I was a successful writer. "I Can't Explain" got into the British charts. It was kind of a lift off the feeling the Kinks had in "You Really Got Me," but the words I suppose were more moon/June. I thought later, yeah, it's got nothing to do with love at all. It's got to do with a whole lot of other things. But that was only in retrospect. I discovered then that I had this ability to just sit down and scribble things out and think that I was writing consciously; but the real meaning was coming from somewhere else that I had absolutely no control over. Odd things would give me an incredible surprise. I suppose I was surprised by how obviously observant I was without ever really being conscious of it.

"Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere" was the second song I wrote. It was modified a bit by Roger Daltrey. That's why he shares a credit with me. Those two songs I wrote while I was living in complete squalor getting stoned every night and listening to Jimmy Reed records: Anyway. Anyhow. Anywhere. Those were just three words I wrote on a piece of paper. You know you used to do that when you were stoned out of your head. You look at it the next day and you say, "What the fuck was I talking about?" Those three words were what I wrote to describe the way Charlie Parker plays. So that became the title for the next single, which was required the statutory two weeks after the release of the first song. I knocked out the song and it was a much more conscious thing. I already looked back at 'I Can't Explain' and started to think, yeah, this one's gonna be about a punk kid.

About a year after that Kit Lambert started announcing to everyone that he thought I was a genius. I mean, I produced a fantastic amount of demos. I holed up in my flat with two tape machines writing consistently. Kit often used to fantasize about doing something on a grand scale – even then. It was his idea to do the



mini opera on a *A Quick One* (Happy Jack in the states). It was him pushing me to do grander things. So even if I wasn't getting a reputation as a great writer, Kit Lambert was telling me I was a great writer and I believed him because I wanted to believe him. There were other people I respected who liked our music. Jagger really liked it and said so. The Beatles really liked *A Quick One*. Paul McCartney was saying that they were in the recording studio - at that time they would have been recording *Sergeant Pepper* - and they heard that album and really liked it and he said they were doing something similar and that was affecting what they were doing, which I thought was very nice.

"MY GENERATION"

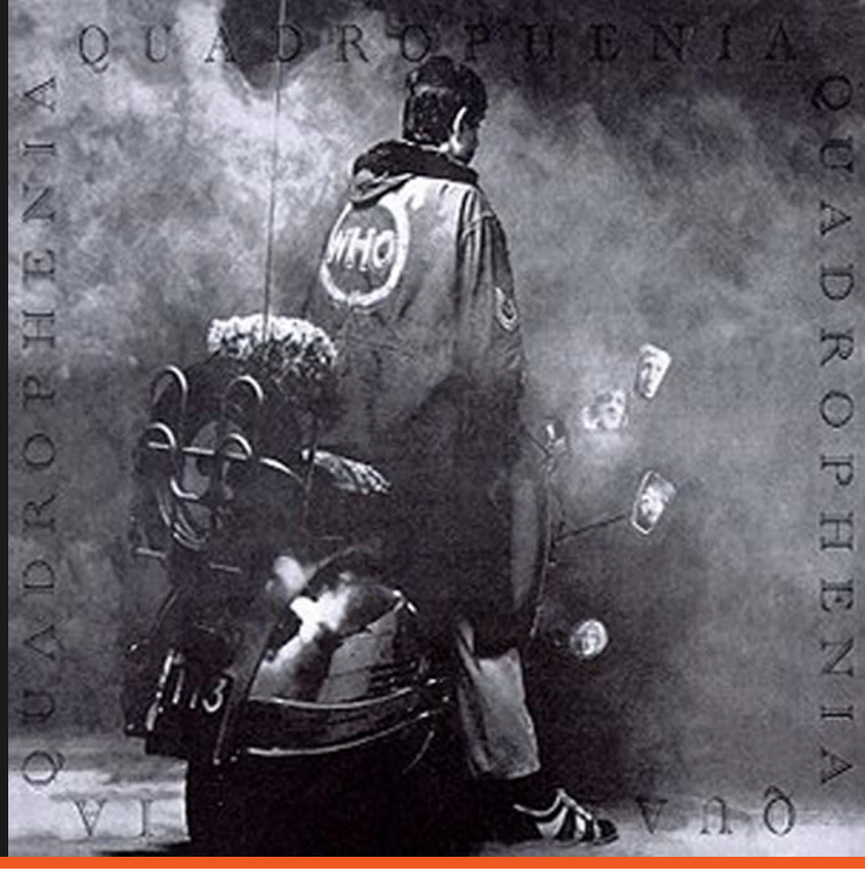
I remember very clearly when "My Generation" came out with the words "I hope I die before I get old." I kept on being asked, "Do you really mean that and if you're working in five years then what do you think?" And I said, "No way am I still going to be doing anything in five years." I really believed I was going to be dead. There was a huge atomic crisis through the Cuban missile thing. I remember in England going to school one day knowing the world was going to be blown to bits. In college a lot of people were walking around like normal and occasionally one person would say what the fuck are we doing all this for? Everybody was so resigned to it. They knew there was going to be an atomic war. No one looked like they were going to back down.

That was the consciousness at the time when everybody was living "under the shadow of the bomb." I was in the Ban the Bomb movement in England for a little while, the Young Communists League, and stuff like that. But the thing that bowled me over was LSD. It wiped me out. I stopped working and got very obsessed with it and really did believe it was something enormous and incredibly important. I was also involved with some of the sentiments surrounding it – the love and peace thing. During this period I can only remember two songs I wrote, "Relax," just pre my first acid trip, which ended up on one of our albums, and "Pictures of Lily," which was released as a single. Afterwards I wrote some very weird songs, like "Faith in Something Bigger," that nothing ever happened to, "Happy Jack." "The Underture to *Tommy*" and "Welcome" from *Tommy*. This is before I ever had the idea for *Tommy*.

TOMMY START HERE

I tend to think in trains of thought for maybe up to two years. I'll start to write a song, and I won't really know what it's got to do with – then two years later I'll look back on it and then I'll know why I wrote it. It might have some kind of catch thing that fits in with all the others. I know when I put *Tommy* together I drew on all kinds of sources that came from earlier on that just fit. Every time I wrote I was writing about that kind of thing – adolescence or spiritual desperation. Then in order to draw all the loose ends together I have to sit down and do it. I have a studio in my house where I finish things off and organize music. I have to shut myself up in this room and work. I start to

“Almost from the first time I put pen to paper I was a successful writer. ‘I Can’t Explain’ got into the British charts. It was kind of a lift off the feeling the Kinks had in ‘You Really Got Me.’ ”



build up to it in a way that it becomes sort of inevitable. Sometimes I force myself to do it by announcing the thing up front. I talked about *Tommy* at incredible length to Jann Wenner in a long, long article in *Rolling Stone* before I’d even finished writing it. I said so much that I just had to get it done.

It’s really good to do it that way. You can gauge your enthusiasm. It could be genuine enthusiasm or it could be an infatuation with an idea. So you can work it out by seeing how well you sell it to somebody else. And if you sell it really well, you know you’re behind it. If you sell it to fifty people and you’re still really up about it, then you know you’re onto one that’s going to get done.

It’s a peculiar working process. Often I pretend to everybody that I know what I’m doing when a lot of the times I really don’t. Until things come together. That’s why both *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia* don’t have properly conceived endings, because they were never properly conceived in front. They were allowed to happen in a spontaneous way, sort like a Buster Keaton two reeler, rather than being scripted in front and made to happen. And if you didn’t have an ending you didn’t really care about it. You just had everybody walk off into the sunset. *Tommy* came out too soon. The last part was very rushed. There’s so much I would change now, but we had to stop working on it. We were sick of it.

SUFFERING FROM MATURITY

Up to now I’ve written the same sort of thing. Even in *Tommy*, where I tried to write about something that was a fantasy in a sense, it seemed to have a lot of familiar threads running through it, like family problems, the street social problems like the bullying cousin Kevin, and the druggy things. I don’t think I’ve really been able to break loose from that sort of thing. Also, after the recording of *Who’s Next*, I really did go through sort of a strange frame of mind. I did start to get a little bit desperate again – in an adolescent sense – that feeble clutching at some sort of sense of identity. “I’m One” from *Quadrophenia* was written in a genuine melancholic state. I hope I’ve gotten that type of thing out of my system.

Photo Credit: Paul Natkin/ Photo Reserve, Inc.

I don't feel the need to celebrate adolescence anymore. I'm starting to get bored with writing about it. It's starting to become a semi-middle aged attitude. I don't feel at all ill at ease with where I am. I don't feel I'm suffering from maturity. I'm quoting myself there. I said that in an interview with Melody Maker – the best thing I ever said – that somebody suffers from maturity. A lot of people walk around acting like adults. It's got nothing to do with morality or dignity. I mean you can be free or you can act stupidly, but you can still be dignified. Sometimes you can still be within the law.

BEGINNINGS

I wrote two songs very early in our career. Keith Moon wasn't even with us then. One was called "It Was You," the other I can't even remember. But the group used to do them and they were quite well received at the pubs we played. This was pre our contact with the real situation of the kids on the street. It was pre our playing places like the Goldhawk Club and Shepherd's Bush. The Mod movement wasn't really underway. It was happening then but it wasn't quite solid. Although I knew what it was to be stoned I wasn't really into the pep pill ideology, the sped up thing that went along with the Mods. Then I laid off writing for about two years and we started to get more into rhythm and blues. When we went for a recording audition with EMI they said they liked the band but they felt we needed original material. Actually, EMI could very well have said, "they'll make a good R&B band" 'cause a little bit later a lot of R&B bands did get recording contracts – like John Mayall and Georgie Fame – just on the strength of their covering other R&B material. So it might never have occurred to me to write again. It was more EMI's idea. Actually, I'm deeply indebted to them.

Songwriters on Songwriting

Successful songwriters weigh in on how to write a great song.
Topics covered include: Writing through writer's block,
co-writing, knowing when your song is finished, and more!
And as a Guitar Tricks reader it's yours free.

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16 TIPS TO WRITING YOUR FIRST SONG ON GUITAR

By Kathy Dickson

Writing a song is one of the most fulfilling parts of being a musician. It can also be one of the most intimidating. We've all heard songs that sound so extraordinary that we're certain they were written by someone with mad powers of inspiration. But the truth is songwriting is a skill anyone can learn.

The thing to remember is that every successful songwriter started out as a beginner. Behind every musical masterpiece lies a trail of songs that didn't work – Songs that the writer cut their chops on. Like anything you've learned to do, the more you practice writing songs and the more you fail at it, the better you get.

The following are some things to know about songwriting so you can get you started writing your first song - and every song after that!

1. SONGWRITING IS AN ART, NOT A SCIENCE.
There is no one formula and no right or wrong way to do it. So relax. The only way to write a song is to jump in and feel your way through the process.

2. LEARN ALL YOU CAN ABOUT PLAYING THE GUITAR.
The more adept you are at playing your instrument, the more "colors" you will have at your disposal to express the ideas in your head.

3. LISTEN TO ARTISTS WHOSE MUSIC YOU LIKE.
Dissect the songs they write. Try to identify the basic structure of what it is these artists have done with the songs and what you like about them. What draws your ear in?

4. BOLTS FROM THE BLUE.
Inspiration can strike at any time and in the darndest places, like while driving a car, taking a shower, or in a darkened movie theater. Inspiration can even invade your dreams. You've no doubt heard how Keith Richards woke one night just long enough to get the riff to "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" down on a tape recorder before falling back into a sound sleep. Many famous songs have been written under similarly mysterious circumstances. Always keep pen and paper within reach—in your car's glove compartment, in the medicine cabinet, on the nightstand, etc. Be prepared to get ideas down on paper when they first come to you because if you don't, chances are they'll be lost. It's also good to have a recording device handy to capture any musical phrases that come to you.

5. FIRST DRAFT AND FINAL DRAFT ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS.
Be prepared to pick through your song over and over and over again. Chances are excellent that the first draft of your song will not be the last. Most of the time, it's just the beginning of the songwriting process. You might change as little as a note or two here and there, or you might change whole chunks of your song. Knowing and understanding that this is part of the procedure will save you much grief.

6. THE PERFECTION MYTH.
If you expect your song to be "perfect," know that you are setting yourself up for failure. And that's not because your abilities as a songwriter are lacking. Seeking perfection in art is futile because it doesn't exist. We all perceive art differently, so don't stress over the idea of perfection.

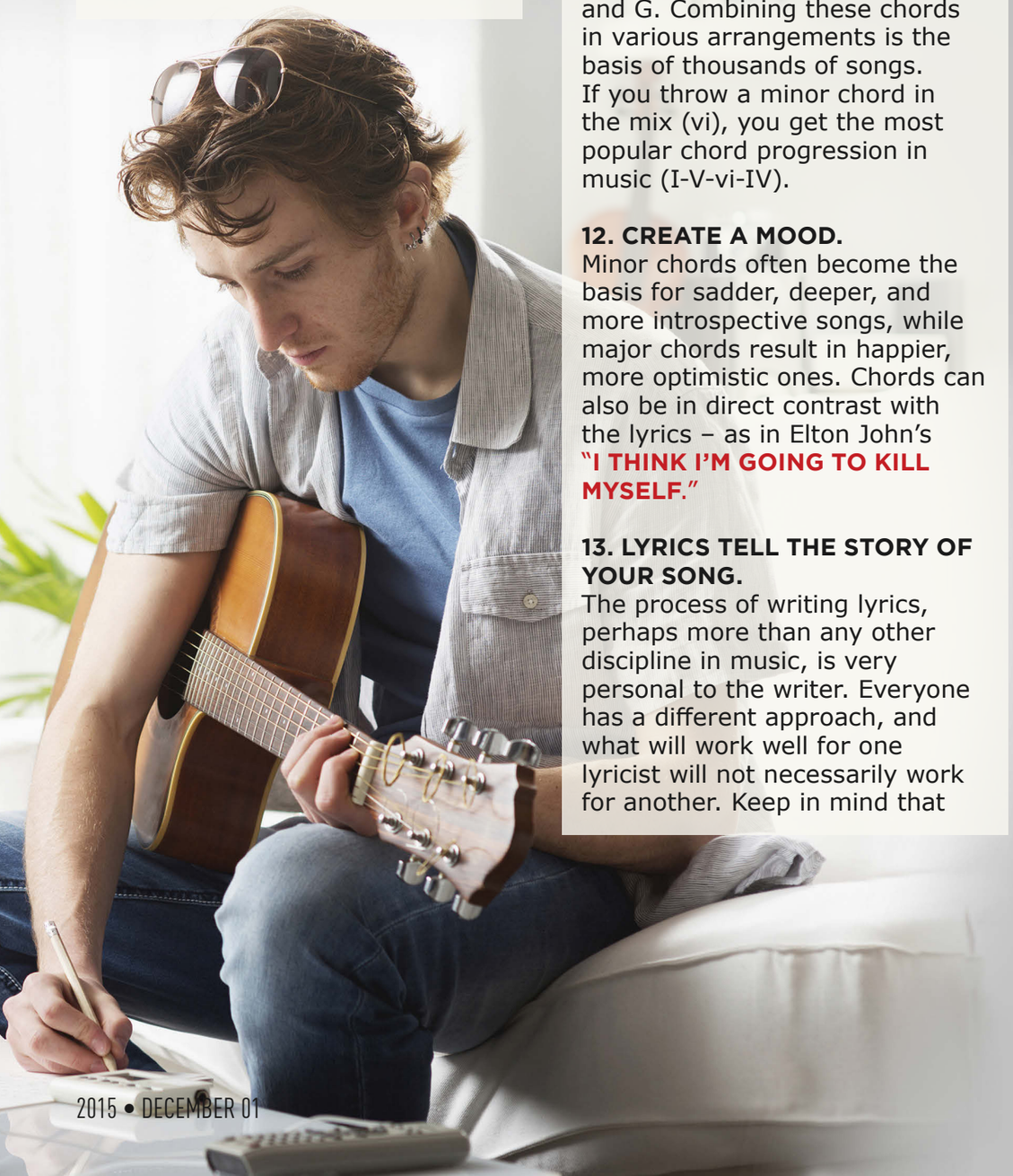
7. WRITE FOR YOURSELF AND NOT FOR SOME IMAGINARY AUDIENCE.
Fear of judgment is an instant killer of creativity and risk-taking. Don't tailor your song for an audience that may or may not come. Create for yourself. Be true to that voice within.

8. THROW NOTHING AWAY.
Never throw away a first draft of a song because you're unhappy with it. You never know where a piece of the puzzle will come from. And yes, they do turn up in those first inklings of a song. You might find yourself reworking your final draft with a word or two, or a line or two from your first draft. And no, you won't always remember how the first draft sounded. Keep every bit of

the song until you finish it, and then keep it a little bit longer for the rewrites ahead.

9. SONG STRUCTURE.
A song is made up of melody, chords, rhythm, and lyrics. Most songs will tell a story through some combination of title, intro, verse, pre-chorus, chorus, bridge, solo, hook, refrain, and outro. All songs are put together with some or all of these parts in a particular pattern.

10. KNOW YOUR BASIC CHORDS.
To begin writing songs, you should at least know how to play the most basic chords—C, G, D, E, Am, F, B, and Em—which just so happen to be the most popular chords as well.



11. UNDERSTAND CHORD PROGRESSIONS.
Most pop and rock songs follow simple chord progressions. A chord progression is a harmonious movement of chords in a particular key. The most basic chord progression in popular music is I-IV-V – that is, the 1st, 4th and 5th chord of a key played in succession. These are called primary chords. For example, in the key of C, the 1st, 4th, and 5th chords are C, F, and G. Combining these chords in various arrangements is the basis of thousands of songs. If you throw a minor chord in the mix (vi), you get the most popular chord progression in music (I-V-vi-IV).

12. CREATE A MOOD.
Minor chords often become the basis for sadder, deeper, and more introspective songs, while major chords result in happier, more optimistic ones. Chords can also be in direct contrast with the lyrics – as in Elton John's **"I THINK I'M GOING TO KILL MYSELF."**

13. LYRICS TELL THE STORY OF YOUR SONG.
The process of writing lyrics, perhaps more than any other discipline in music, is very personal to the writer. Everyone has a different approach, and what will work well for one lyricist will not necessarily work for another. Keep in mind that lyrics are not poems. Though they share many qualities, like cadence (the rhythm of the line), rhyme, etc., there are in fact many differences. Songs are meant to be understood quickly, so your lyrics need to be descriptive though succinct. Songs are also meant to be sung, so avoid hard-to-pronounce words and incompatible consonants.

14. RHYMING.
Be judicious in your use of simple rhyming schemes. New songwriters often make the mistake of rhyming all their lyrics. Rhyming can be extremely powerful when done right (**"AMERICAN PIE"** by Don McLean is one example) but more often than not, it makes your lyrics sound as predictable as something out of a kindergarten textbook.

15. EXPERIMENT.
Don't feel like your song has to fit in a box with other songs of a certain style. Don't feel limited by instrumentation, song structure, or genre. Maybe you want to write a song that doesn't have a chorus, or a song that combines two different genres. Give it a go. Practically all genres of music started with experimentation.

16. PERFORM YOUR ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS.
Muster up the courage to play your original song to friends and family. Ask for honest feedback, which you will then use to improve your song. Resist the urge to get defensive and discount everything but the positive. Really listen to what your listener is telling you about what they hear and/or fail to hear. Take everything in, but before making any drastic changes, make sure those changes resonate with you.

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The Keith Richards Style

Some of the most popular guitar riffs in our lifetime have been written and popularized by Keith Richards. In this lesson, instructor **Anders Mouridsen** demonstrates the basic tenets of Richards' style, taking us through the open G tuning (a favorite of Richards) and then helping us transpose some of the harmonies and techniques – that Richards popularized – back to a standard tuning. Richards' most commonly utilized chords, techniques, and playing tendencies are all covered.

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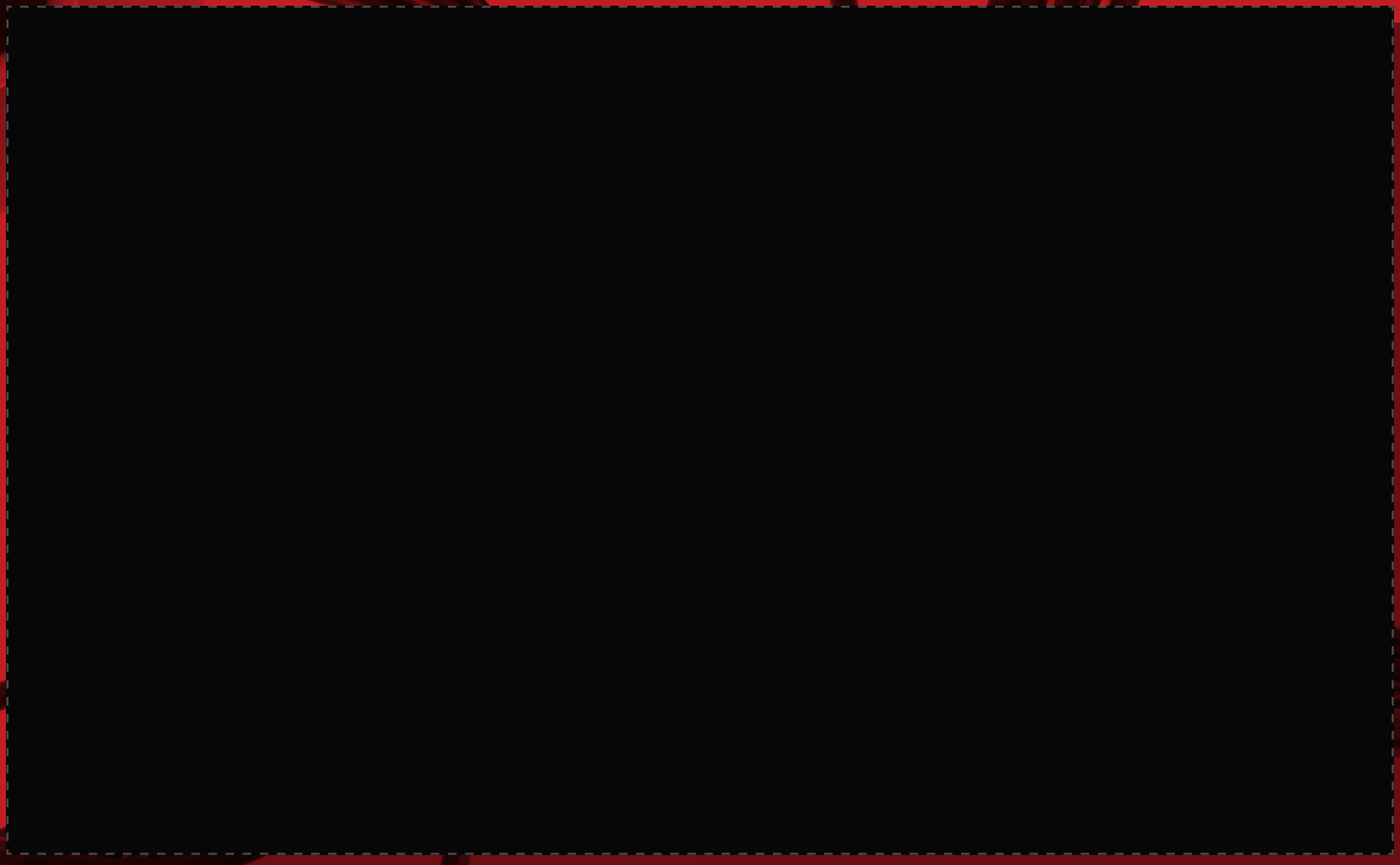

The B.B. King Style

If you want to learn the basic tenets of the blues guitar style, B.B. King might be the best example to follow. His playing style, particularly his bending and vibrato technique, have had a tremendous amount of influence on the "blues sound." In this video lesson series, **Anders Mouridsen** takes us through the ins and outs of that technique along with a number of other trademarks of King's playing style. King's soloing style, bending, phrasing, and a number of other crucial blues topics are all covered in extensive detail.

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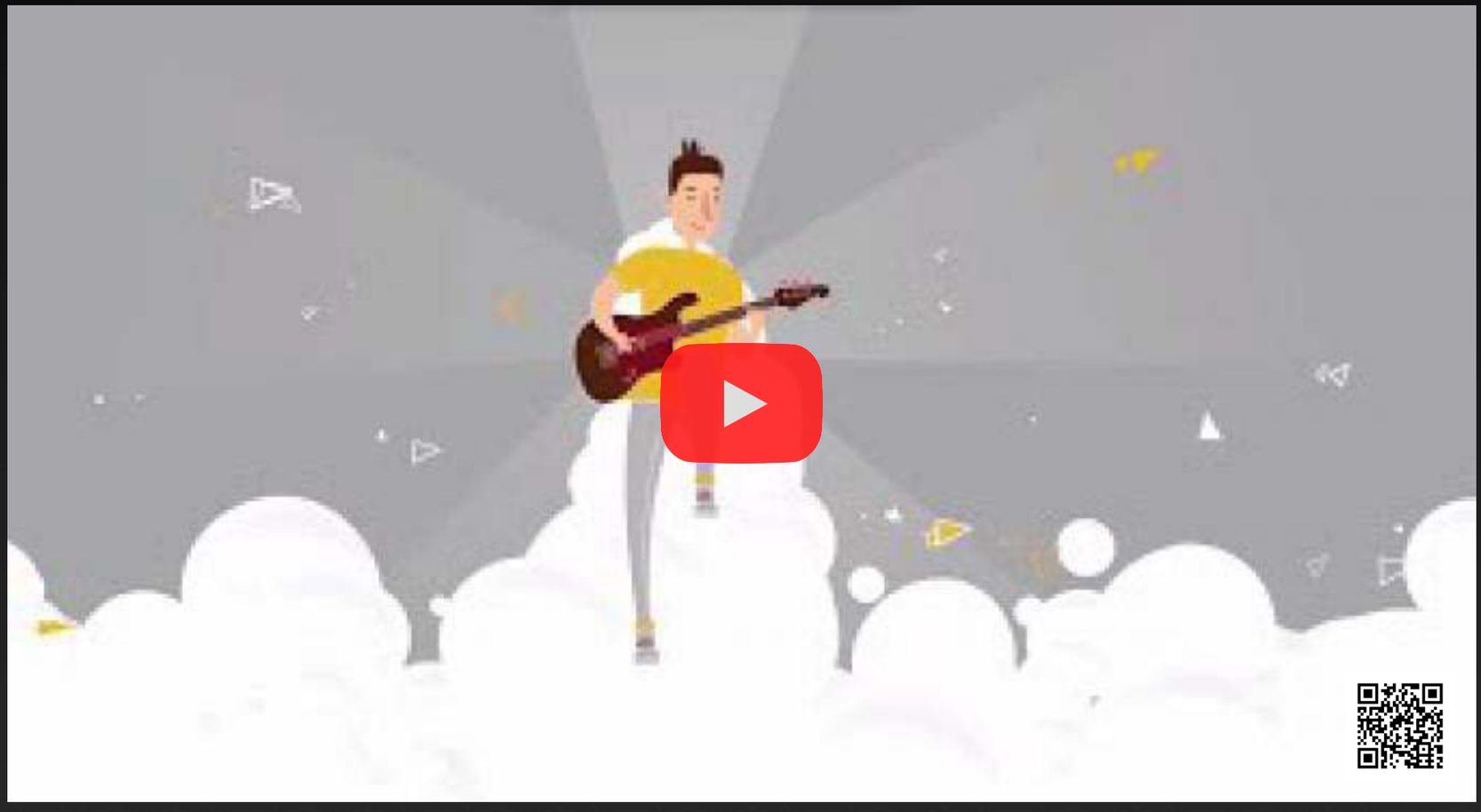

THE MAN WHO DROVE A NAIL

with a dream.

MARTY WAS AN ASPIRING SONGWRITER. ONE DAY, HE DECIDED TO HAMMER A NAIL INTO A WALL. "THIS IS WHERE I WILL HANG MY FIRST GOLD RECORD," HE DECLARED—WHICH WAS A BOLD PROCLAMATION, ESPECIALLY COMING FROM A GUY WHOSE NEXT BEST OPTION WAS A JOB WRITING TOASTER MANUALS. FOR SIX LONG YEARS HE WALKED BY THAT EMPTY NAIL. AND SO DID HIS WIFE AND THREE KIDS. THIS TOOK GUTS. PARTICULARLY AFTER EATING MASHED POTATOES COVERED IN 69-CENT GRAVY FROM A PACKET. BUT MARTY PERSEVERED. FOCUSED ON SUCCESS. UNTIL ONE DAY, A GOLD RECORD HUNG ON THAT NAIL, AND THEN A PLATINUM NEXT TO IT. HIS STORY REMINDS US THAT THE WORLD COULD USE MORE DREAMERS LIKE MARTY. *For more on Marty and other stories of courage that inspire us, visit taylorguitars.com*

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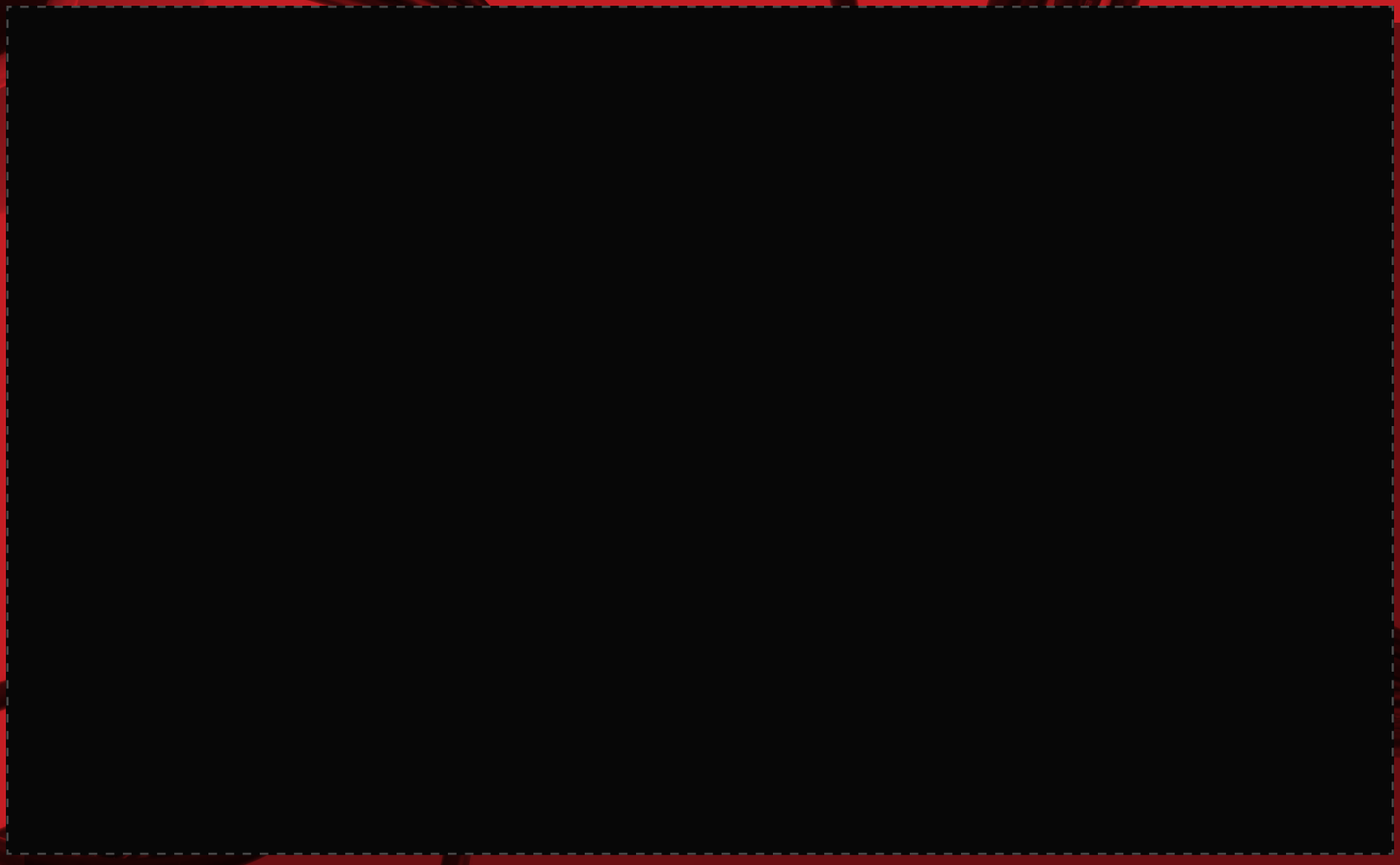
Boom Chick Fingerpicking

In this four-part video tutorial, **Ben Lindolm** takes us through a technique called **"boom chick fingerpicking."** This is basically the act of playing the bass line (or root notes) with your thumb, while your fingers pick the melody out from the rest of the chord. It's a tricky technique to master, but we can draw inspiration from the likes of Chet Atkins and Tommy Emmanuel, who are both proficient in the boom chick fingerpicking style and have written a number of songs that showcase it brilliantly well.

CLICK HERE FOR FULL FREE LESSON



THE GUITAR TECH

Many of you write in everyday with your questions about guitar, from finding the right gear, to making your current set up work properly, and everything in between.

We'd like to share with you some of the highlights from our own Guitar Tech forum.

ABRASIVES TO THE RESCUE!

Martintrini writes:

I have a Martin D16 that came with rosewood back and sides in a matte/flat finish.
I used a guitar polish and now the rosewood is a rich, shiny finish.
How can I get back the flat/matte finish look?

GUITAR TECH ANSWERS:

I actually have to do this job on a regular basis - you're not the first person to have this happen when polishing a lacquer finish.

The easiest way to reduce the 'gloss' from a lacquer finish is to lightly buff the finish with a fine abrasive - in this case, I would use the finest grade ("0000") of steel wool, buffing only along the grain-lines of the piece of wood being buffed.

Obviously, it would be easy to 'over-do' this buffing process! It should only take a few strokes - pressing lightly - in any one area to remove the gloss from the finish. It's very important to keep the surface of the steel wool 'fresh' (not clogged) by turning it after every few strokes - this way, you get a consistent result. Make sure to keep a magnet (and a vacuum cleaner) around, and clean up your work area frequently - the steel wool 'sheds' constantly, and these bits of wool are incredibly abrasive (and dangerous to pickups) - you need to keep them from 'getting loose'!

Anyhow, that's how I do this job, when I'm asked to do so.

STRING-HEIGHT PREFERENCES EXPLAINED

Roopak writes:

Hello,
I bought a new guitar and played for a while and I think the string height is a bit high for me. Is there an ideal or recommended height for the strings which I can lower to, from the factory set height, which I think is 3.5 mm?

GUITAR TECH ANSWERS:

There is no 'correct' string-height for an acoustic guitar (by the way, the term for this, is the guitar's "action"); the only true guide is your own personal preference. Of course, the harder you pick the strings, the higher the guitar's action needs to be, if you are to avoid having the strings slapping against the frets (known as 'fret-rattle') - this means that if you lower the action on your guitar, you may need to play more gently.

I like pretty-low action on my personal acoustic guitar, and (measuring at the 12th fret) I have my guitar's action set at 1.8mm (.072") on the 1st (high E) string, and at 2.4mm (.095") on the 6th (low E) string. I find this action to be a good compromise between easy playability and very little fret-rattle.

However, you need to understand that measuring the action at the 12th fret is not enough - you also need to check the action at the first fret. Frequently, the individual string-slots in the guitar's nut are too high, which leaves you with high action at the first fret - this makes it very hard to finger any chords played in the first three frets; also it throws all these chords out of tune.

If you want, I can go into more detail about how to measure your guitar's action at the nut - the process is fairly easy, but is time-consuming and technical to explain. However, if your guitar's action is too high at the nut, you will probably need to take it to an experienced repair-tech to correct this, because special files (and experience) are needed to perform this adjustment correctly.

I hope this helps - if you want more detail about any of these questions, just ask. That's what I'm here for.

PRS SE STANDARD 24 ELECTRIC GUITAR

Review By **Dave Celentano**

STREET PRICE
$499

It's been 30 years since Paul Reed Smith introduced his first guitars to an unsuspecting guitar community at NAMM. And it wasn't long before the buzz hit the streets: PRS guitars played great, looked amazing, and sounded spectacular. In fact, PRS was one of the first small guitar manufacturers to give the biggies a run for their money by raising the bar on quality electric guitars. But in the early years their attractive guitars were expensive and out of the price range for many musicians. Now PRS has delivered the SE Standard 24, which is a great-playing, excellent-sounding, and wallet-friendly guitar. This is welcome news for guitarists not able to drop a grand or more for a quality electric guitar!

With a street price of $499, the SE Standard 24 model is a new addition to the PRS line and is an affordable import version of their USA-made flagship, the Custom 24. The high standards at PRS demand that their imported guitars be set up first by PRS technicians at their Maryland factory before sending off to retail stores, meaning an off-the-shelf PRS plays and sounds great when the customer first puts their hands on it.

FEATURES

The SE Standard 24 features many of the same appointments as the USA-made Custom 24 – 24 frets, rosewood fretboard, bird inlay, PRS design tremolo, nickel hardware, and a 25" scale length, which puts it between the spongy feel of a Gibson and tight feel of a Fender – a clever and intentional design that captures players from both camps. Unique to the SE Standard 24 are a mahogany body (no maple top) and maple neck.

SOUND & PLAYABILITY

When I checked out comparably priced guitars for tone and playability, the SE Standard 24 won hands down. The SE Standard 24 played great right out of the box; and I was impressed with the comfort and playability of the fast action, "wide-thin" neck (set neck construction), which felt like a neck from the '80s and early '90s shred era. Accessibility up to the 24th fret is a breeze with the double cutaway design and low-profile heel where the neck joins the body.

Thanks to the all-mahogany body and a pair of PRS-designed pickups – an "HFS humbucker" and "Vintage Bass humbucker" in bridge and neck positions respectively – the tone was clear and more defined than other name-brand guitars in the same price range. The addition of a push/pull tone knob for coil split augments the choice of sounds one can squeeze out from the guitar. Players looking for a versatile electric guitar will be impressed with how meaty and defined the humbuckers sound when paired with high-gain overdrive, yet they can sound completely different through a clean amp with the single coil option (I coaxed out some believable Hendrix and Vaughan tones using the single coil feature on the neck pickup). Pretty cool! A three-way blade pickup switch controls toggling between the bridge, neck, and a combination of both pickups.

VERDICT

While this guitar can certainly shred, it also appeals to vintage-minded players with a classic look and sound in mind. For young budding guitarists, as well as working professionals looking for an affordably priced and great-sounding axe to use in the studio or take out on the road, the SE Standard 24 is an ideal choice. This guitar makes playing fun!

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BREEDLOVE PURSUIT CONCERT EBONY ACOUSTIC GUITAR

Review By **Dave Celentano**

STREET PRICE
$699

Breedlove hit a home run with their Pursuit Concert Ebony model acoustic guitar, which won a well-deserved "Best of NAMM" award in 2014. Listed as a "gotta stock" for music instrument retailers, the Pursuit Concert Ebony is an affordably priced acoustic guitar that has the look and feel of more expensive models and brands, but at a fraction of the price.

The Pursuit Concert Ebony is their best-selling body style to date, and was designed after the original Breedlove body shape, which debuted in 1992. And understandably so: It's a well-balanced and compact acoustic guitar. Finger-stylists or vocalists looking for an accompanying guitar will find the body shape comfortable – whether sitting or standing wearing a strap.

FEATURES

A big part of the guitar's warmth and charm is the wood architecture: a mahogany neck with a rosewood fretboard, striped ebony on the back and sides (which looks spectacular), and a solid Engelmann spruce top that's a bit stiff-sounding at first, but like a fine wine, gets better with age. Usually reserved for more expensive guitars, the spruce top has a crisp tone, projects sound louder than other woods, and sounds beautiful using either finger-style technique or digging in with strumming.

Breedlove used their Bridge Truss system for the top, which is a unique design that reduces tension on the soundboard and allows the top to vibrate more naturally. This architecture minimizes string tension from the bridge, thus eliminating the "bridge belly" that is common on other brands' acoustics, which provides top dependability for many years. And speaking of bridges, the Pursuit Concert features a pinless bridge that negates the need to drill six holes, which compromises the integrity and tone of the top. Plus this feature makes changing strings quicker, easier, and does away with fussy bridge pins!

Nowadays, most acoustic players need some amplification to be heard over conversations and background noise at coffee shops, restaurants, and other gigging venues. The Pursuit Concert Ebony model fulfills that need with a Fishman ISYS+ system and installed pickup that includes low-profile controls for volume, bass, treble, phase, and tuner. The pickup is powered by a 9-volt battery and includes a low-battery indicator. The output is a ¼" jack to run through an amp or PA, and a USB port for integration with recording software on Macs and PCs.

SOUND & PLAYABILITY

This guitar produces a rich-sounding, articulate, and defined tone with low end that doesn't get muddy, plus has remarkable sustain. I was particularly impressed with the neck, which has a semigloss finish. It also felt immediately friendly and comfortable to play, even for small hands. The single cutaway provided easy access to the upper areas of the fretboard. The neck and cutaway designs are both welcome features for electric players looking for an acoustic addition to their arsenal. Compared to other acoustic guitars, the Pursuit Concert Ebony was easy to play and responded well to a light touch.

VERDICT

Those in the market for an affordable, acoustic guitar that has clarity and full-body tones, either acoustically or plugged into an amp or PA, the Pursuit Concert Ebony is a perfect choice. It comes with a gig bag, lifetime warranty on materials and workmanship for the original owner, plus a two-year warranty on the tuner machine heads and electronics. It's a great deal for a guitar in this price range!

YAMAHA THR10 MODELING AND RECORDING AMP

Review By **Dave Celentano**

STREET PRICE **$299**

Immediately I was struck by how retro and cool the Yamaha THR10 looks with its orange lights glowing behind the chevron grill. It has the appearance of being a tube amp but actually uses solid-state technology to model a variety of amplifiers. This snazzy unit is visually attractive and could easily sit on a desk or coffee table at home or in the office. Common sense would have you believing that an amp this small, portable, and lightweight couldn't possibly sound that good, but it does. In fact, it has an assortment of killer tones that rivals and quite possibly beats most modeling amps available today.

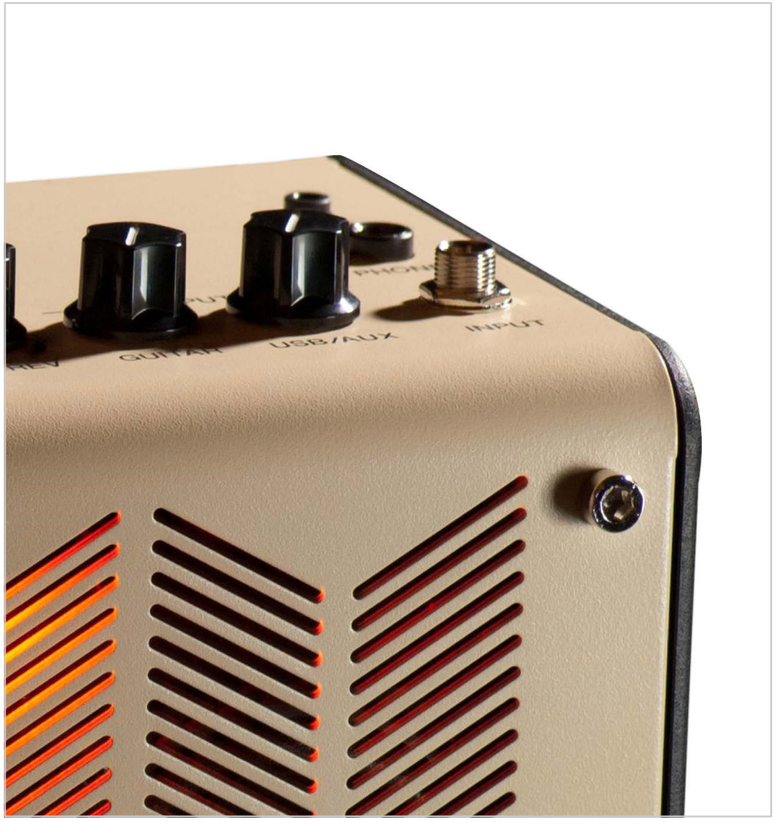
FEATURES

This inspiringly versatile and small 10-watt amp features two full-range, eight-centimeter stereo speakers, five classic vintage amp simulations, an array of great-sounding effects, tuner, five user memory banks, and headphone, auxiliary, and USB inputs. And it's powered by your choice of AC or eight AA batteries.

BASS
MIDDLE
TREBLE
EFFECT
DLY/REV
GUITAR
USB/AUX
INPUT

SOUND

The THR10 uses Yamaha's proprietary Virtual Circuitry Modeling (VCM) technology to replicate classic vintage amp tones. They did an amazing job with details, like how the Master and Gain knobs function and work together. Authentic tube tones digitally mirror a variety of iconic amps that will not disappoint. I played a Strat and Les Paul through the five amp models and was impressed with everything. The Gain and Master knobs react much like the original amps they modeled, and when combined with the Guitar Output knob, you can set the desired tone at any volume level. This means a killer sound that won't rattle the neighbors' windows! Rather than modeling the amp sound, the Gain and Master controls mirror the analog circuitry, so they react the same way as the vintage amps, which is great news if you're used to playing through tube amps. Yamaha even addressed how the amp responds to pick sensitivity, so a soft touch will result in a cleaner tone, while an aggressive pick attack tends to break up and distort.



Rather than using the actual trademarked names, Yamaha uses alternates for five unique choices of amp models: Clean, Crunch, Lead, Brit Hi, and Modern. A little experimenting with the Gain and Master controls in conjunction with the Guitar Output knob for each of the five amp models delivers the respective classic tones. Use Gain and Master controls to find your desired sound and Guitar Output to adjust volume. To my ears the five classic amps modeled sounded like the following: Clean: Fender Twin, Crunch: VOX AC30, Lead: Marshall Plexi, Brit Hi: Marshall JCM800, and Modern: Mesa Boogie Rectifier.

Yamaha didn't stop with just the amp models. This little powerhouse amp comes with all the essential effects that, by the way, sound magnificent. They are: chorus, flanger, phaser, tremolo, spring reverb, hall reverb, and delay – all of which can be used individually by turning the effects knob clockwise to increase the blend of each effect with the dry signal. In addition, the delay time can be set manually with the Tap: Time button on the amp, which also doubles as a guitar tuner. Once you've dialed up a killer-sounding amp, effect, or combination of both, it can be stored in one of five user memory banks. The auxiliary input is a great feature allowing you to plug in an external source (iPhone, iPad, or other music player), and is perfect for practicing and playing along with backing tracks. The auxiliary volume is adjustable so you can get just the right blend between the backing track and your guitar.

VERDICT

Whether you're a guitarist starting out or a working professional musician, this is a fantastic practice amp that doubles as a studio workhorse capable of producing surprisingly great tones. Considering all that the THR10 can do and the $299 street price, this is a must-have amp for your arsenal.

The more the merrier

3 for the price of 2

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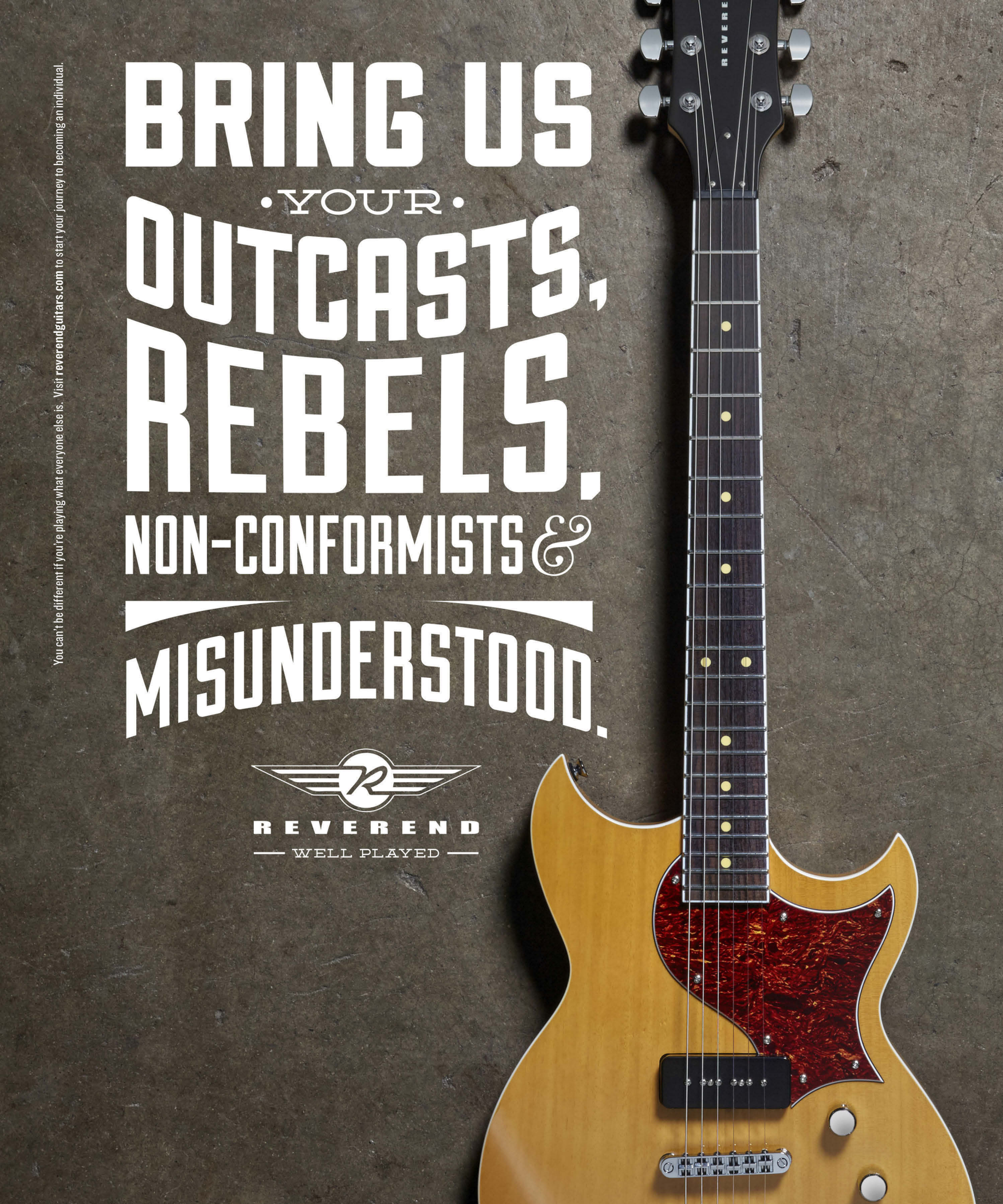
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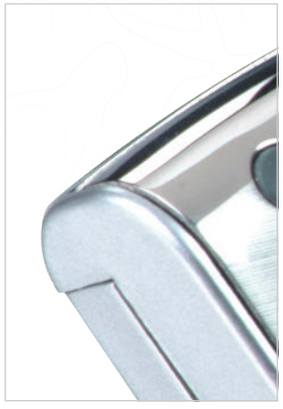
PETERSON STROBOCLIP TUNER

Review By **Dave Celentano**

STREET PRICE
$79.99

There's a reason why Peterson strobe tuners are used by some of the world's most accomplished guitarists and techs: They are exceptionally accurate and reliable. Peterson has been in the business of making professional grade tuners for more than sixty-five years – that's simply what they do. For the StroboClip model, they've packaged their proprietary technology in a compact and economical unit that easily clips on the guitar headstock, and can be stored in most guitar cases. The tuner is accurate to 0.1 cent (1/10 of one cent), making it one of the most accurate tuners on the market.



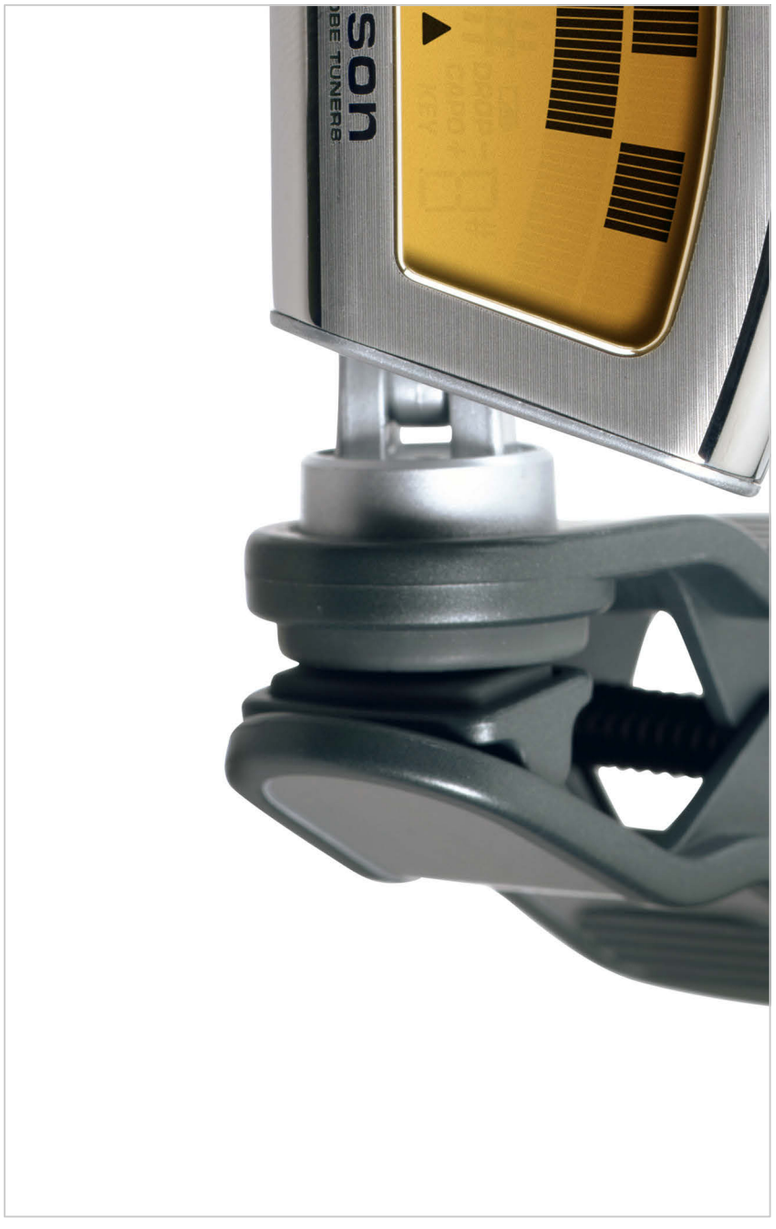
FEATURES

Some of the coolest features are the trademarked "Sweetened Tunings," which are designed to accommodate subtle tuning discrepancies between various instruments making chords sound more in tune over the entire fretboard. I used this tuning option with a Gibson Les Paul, Ovation acoustic, and a Rodriguez classical. I was impressed with how well in tune all three guitars sounded when playing chords over the entire fretboard. Tip: This product is extremely sensitive, so you might need to pluck the string more gently to tune.

There are 28 Sweetened Tunings packed into this unit for a variety of instruments besides guitar: bass, banjo, lap steel, dobro/resonator, ukulele, mandolin, violin, viola, cello, horns (brass and woodwind), sitar, and even bagpipes. Guitarists using drop tunings or a capo will find the "Drop/Capo" feature extremely helpful because it automatically transposes the tuning note for you, eliminating the need to calculate. There are also tuning options for instruments equipped with the Buzz Feiten tuning system. Very cool!

The buttons on the top of the tuner are easy to use and allow scrolling through the various tuning options. You can also access specifics in each tuning bank, like deviating from the standard 440 concert pitch (adjustment from 400-490 Hz), drop tunings, and capo usage.

The tuner is encased in a sharp-looking, stainless steel chassis with the clip-on portion made of durable carbon fiber and a soft rubber grip that won't scratch the instrument's finish. The unique design allows 360-degree adjustment and pivoting of the LCD display, which is a major advantage for easy viewing. Speaking of viewing, the display is easy to read both on a dark stage and in bright sunlight – a serious plus for working musicians. The tuner comes with a CR2032 battery and 1-year warranty.



VERDICT

Whether you're just starting out or a working musician, this tuner should be in your guitar case. For all that's packed into this small unit with a street price of about $79, this might be one of the best music investments you'll ever make.

ANOTHER TAKE
DO THE
BOOGIE

BY DAVE RUBIN

LEARN HOW TO PLAY CLASSIC BOOGIE RIFFS

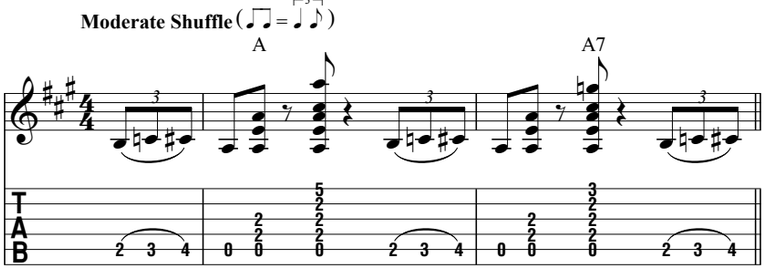
Photo Credit: Paul Natkin/ Photo Reserve, Inc.

Fig. 1 Audio

Anthropologist and author Nora Zeale Hurston described the earliest boogie woogie music played by guitarists in late 1880s juke joints as, “One guitar was enough for a dance. To have two was considered excellent. Where two were playing, one man played the lead and the other seconded him. The first player was ‘picking’ and the second was ‘framming,’ that is, playing chords while the lead carried the melody by dexterous finger work. Sometimes a third player was added, and he played a tom-tom effect on the lower strings.”

The following is a select number of classic boogie riffs in the style of the illustrious progenitors of the genre. Listen, learn, and enjoy.

Fig. 1



By the time blues titan John Lee Hooker released his groundbreaking, ground-shaking solo guitar boogies in 1948, he had mastered all three elements with the accompaniment of his stomping feet. **Fig. 1** is similar and is best performed with the bare thumb on the bass strings and the index finger striking up on the treble strings.

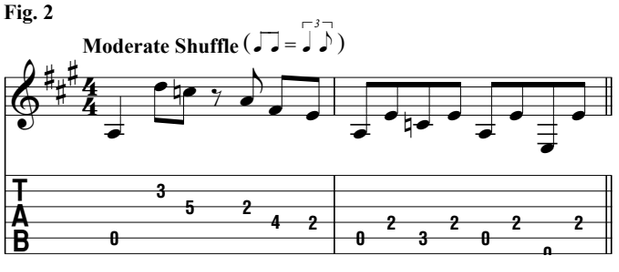
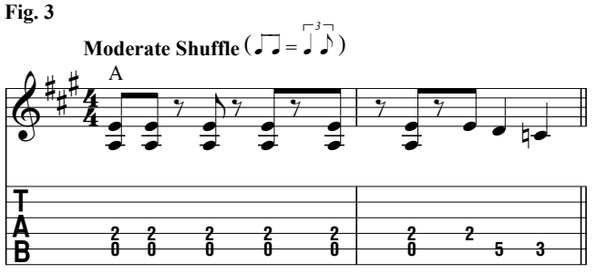
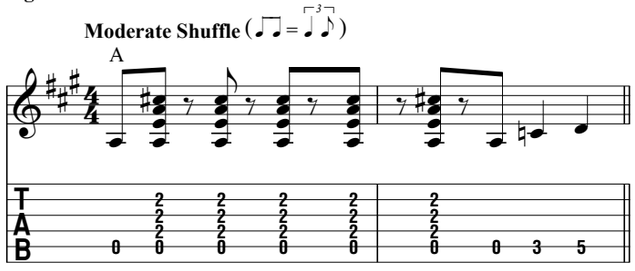
Fig. 2

The legendary West Side, Chicago blues master Magic Sam would often give out with boogie vamps like **Fig. 2**. Notice how the riff in measure 1 combines notes from the A minor pentatonic and major pentatonic scales to form the composite blues scale with a bit more melody.

Fig. 3



60s "hippie" guitarist Norman Greenbaum utilized a classic Hooker-type boogie pattern to help create a Top 40 hit in 1969. **Fig. 3** could be played with bare fingers or straight flatpick on acoustic or electric guitar. However, a big dollop of nasty distortion will add immeasurably to the low down effect. Be sure to mute the strings between each strum.

Fig. 4



The Rev. Billy "F" Gibbons of ZZ Top not only paid homage to a classic Hooker boogie riff, but also did a damn fine imitation of the Boogie Man's patented growl in 1973. Observe the way **Fig. 4**, as opposed to **Fig. 3**, reverses the implied chords in measure 2. Play the A chords with a sharp upstroke to make them snap appropriately and be sure to mute the strings between strums.

Fig. 5

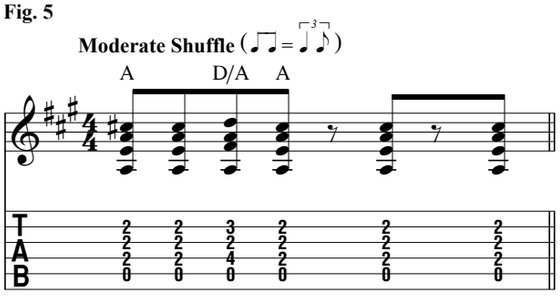
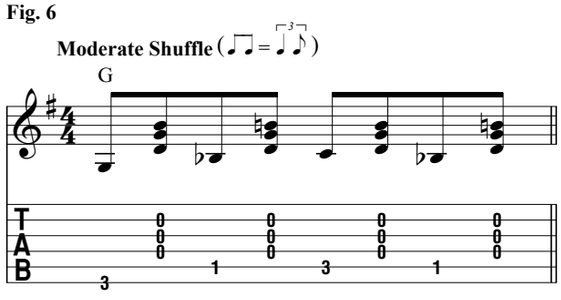


Fig. 5 is a Rolling Stones classic from 1972 as perpetrated by "Keef" Richards. Though he likely was in open G tuning and capoed at fret 2, it is easy enough to play in standard tuning by barring at fret 2 with the index finger.

Fig. 6



From 1966, the legendary swamp bluesman Slim Harpo was no stranger to the boogie beat as seen in **Fig. 6**. Use bare fingers with the thumb picking down on the bass notes and the index finger up strumming on the open string G chord. Be hip to know that the Stones crafted a worthy cover in 1972 when they "got the boogie in them and it had to come out."

Fig. 7

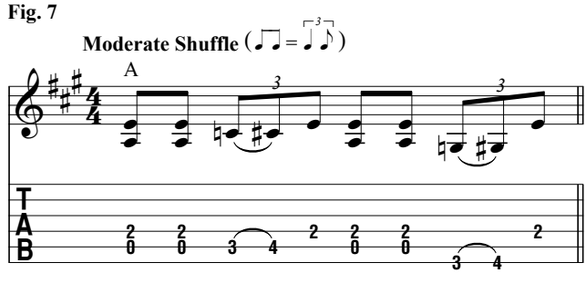
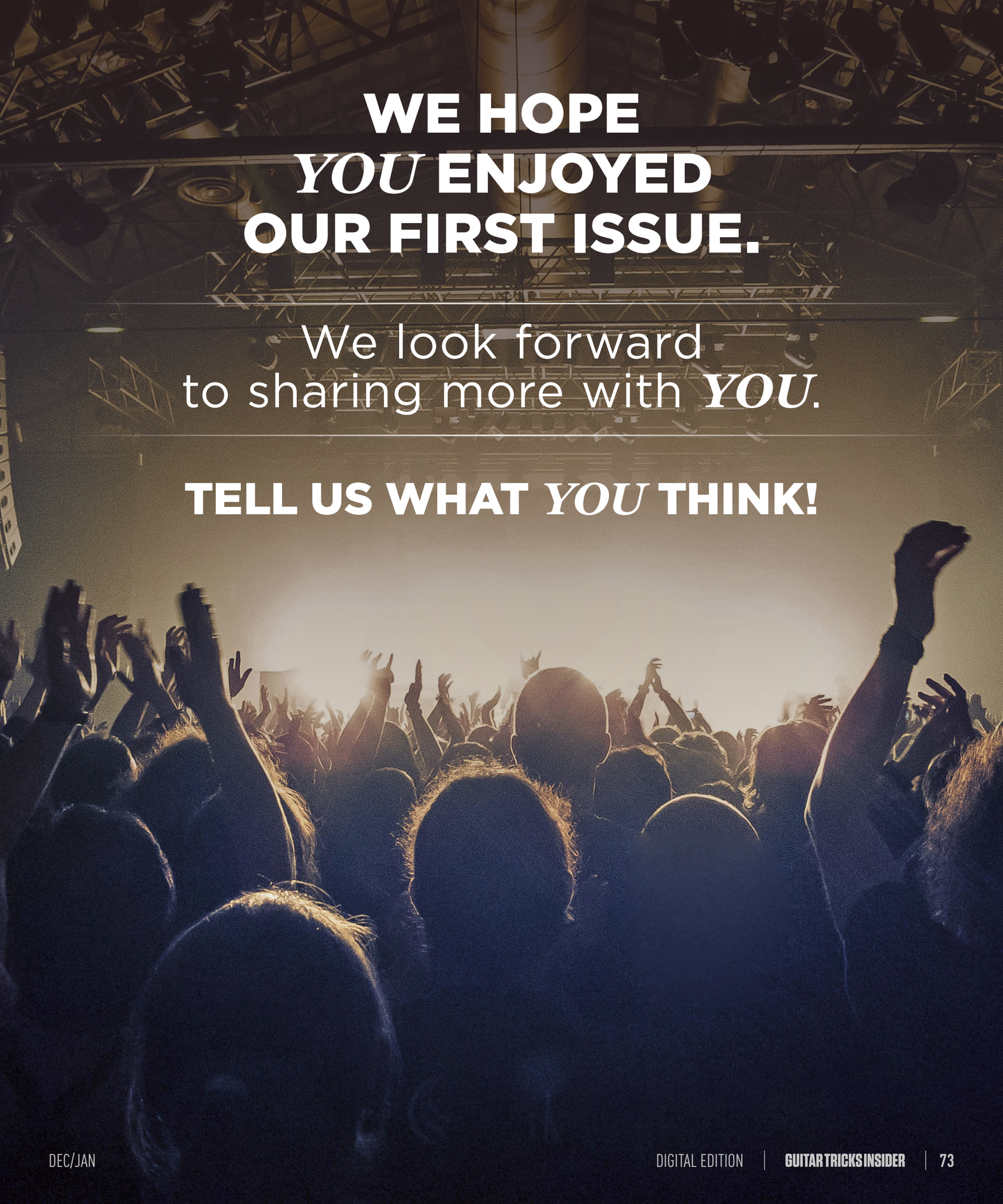


Fig. 7 has appeared in so many boogie tunes for so long it is likely impossible to confirm its origins. Nonetheless, it has substantial propulsive power and makes for a great jam riff.



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We look forward to sharing more with ***YOU***.

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